The Familiar Letters of Peppermint Perkins

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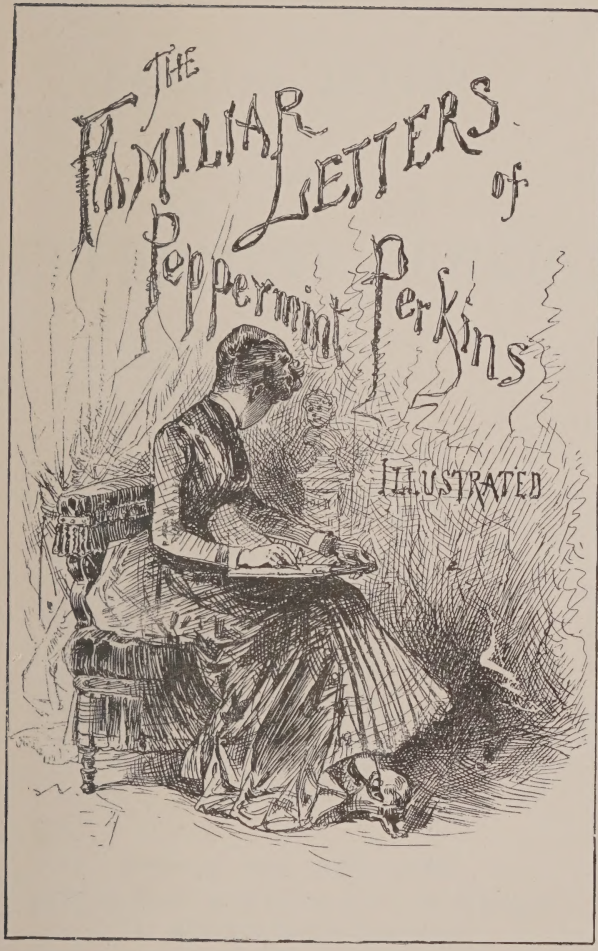
THE
FAMILIAR LETTERS
of
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OF

PEPPERMINT PERKINS

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DEDICATION.

I THINK it's perfectly *lovely* that my letters are to be published, it will be *such* a soaker for the Runover girls, and *so* gratifying to Poesie and me. I asked my brother Joe what I could dedicate them to, and he said, to whatever I liked the *best* that was nice and *reliable*, and I *immediately* said I would dedicate them most *affectionately* to THE BOSTON SATURDAY EVENING GAZETTE.

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

BOSTON, May, 1886.

PREFACE.

To the Public: — I understand that there is a general impression that I am the author of the following letters, or, if not the author, responsible at least for their prevailing tone of depravity. I ask you, what is a sensitive, but chivalrous, man to do? If I acknowledge them as mine my reputation as a man of good sense is lost. If, on the contrary, I deny all connection with them my sister Peppermint will be in a deuce of a mess. I can only beg for your kind indulgence.

Sincerely,

JOE PERKINS.

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FAMILIAR LETTERS

OF

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

I.

BOSTON, January, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I can see you now "in my mind's eye, Horrachio," as old Miss Culcher used to pronounce it at school, sniffing that Grecian nose of yours in a scornful indignation, as mail after mail comes in without any letter from your Peppermint. Say, how do you get your letters in Venice, anyway? Does the postman travel round in a boat, and supposing he should drop his bag in the water? But never mind — I was talking about your nose. Yes, I

can see your sniff, and I can hear you, just as plain as can be, say, "Oh, yes, that Peppermint promised to write to me the very day I sailed, and I've been here for three months, and not a word has she sent me, and not even the GAZETTE, as she most faithfully promised she would, once a month," all of which I acknowledge, with as "meachin" a spirit as Josiah Allen ever had before Samantha's frown. But, my dear Poesie, if you only knew to *what* I have been devoting the time that I *might* have spent in writing to you, you would feel most *gratified* that you haven't written anything hateful to me about it. My time now, my dear, is devoted *almost* wholly to Self-Improvement and to Charity. Excuse me for using italics, but I am *so* earnest about it. My brother Joe says he hasn't seen such an earnest expression on my face since I followed up that homely Harvard Senior all one winter, who was going to have such a swell spread class-day. (You remember him. He didn't have it, after all, for his grand-

father died, and we were mad enough to chew up the old gentleman and the grandson too.) It is just *despicable* of Joe to say such things; but you know that he is getting to grow old and stout, and his boots begin to hurt him; so we won't mind him. Well, *revenons à nos moutons*, Clara Smart and I.

Of course I know I promised you I would not take up with a single Boston girl after you'd gone; but Clara isn't a Boston girl,—she is from Runover, and she is awfully smart. They have colleges and observatories and everything there to make girls smart; it's in the air. Every other man you meet there has discovered something or looks as if he was just going to; and as for the girls — well, they look as if they'd got all their discovering done, and there was nothing left in the world worth their notice. I suppose you will feel sarcastic just here, and want to ask me how she happens to notice *me*. Well, I forgot to mention that there is one thing in the world they *do* think is worth noticing, and that

is a *man;* and my brother Joe is a man. "Am I lucid?" as old Professor Keen used to say in the philosophy class. But don't for the world say anything to any one, for Clara and I are the *best* of friends (*pro tem.*, of course — that is, until *you* come back), and I would not have her think I notice she is laying for Joe for *anything*.

Well, where was I? Oh, yes, Clara and I went up to Mr. Stirrem's church to hear the singing. They have got an elegant tenor there. Joe says he hasn't got any voice, they only hire him for his winning ways; but, anyway, there is something that draws great audiences there (I wonder if I oughtn't to say congregation? and it must be he, because the rest of the choir are nothing at all), and for a wonder I listened to the sermon, too, and it was perfectly affecting, all about aims in life and things of that kind, and the traces we must all leave behind us in the sands of time. Maybe it was because the allusion to sands made me think of Sconset. Joe said it was; but at

any rate I felt just like crying, and was quite serious after I got home, especially after Joe made the remark that all the traces I'd ever leave behind me would be caramel papers and hair-pins, and I determined to begin to be more serious. I did begin that very night by not doing up any crimps. I was going to wear my hair like Clara's. She never wears any crimps. Runover girls never do, though they have never advanced any sufficiently good reason to me for not crimping it, for they all look like old fuds with it so, and they spend just as much and more time brushing and smoothing it at night than I do on my "Fedoras."

Well, I was going to say I didn't do up any; but about three o'clock I woke up and remembered that I had promised to go skating with Charlie Brood out to Jamaica the next morning, and I knew any amount of self-improvement wouldn't make up for the absence of crimps in his eyes, so I just snaked out of bed and up with two "Fedoras;" but no sooner had I got

them up than my conscience began to reproach me for my weakness, and after I got back into bed I determined that even Charlie Brood's criticisms shouldn't influence me, and I began to take them down; but you see I was so sleepy, getting up so suddenly (it all was like a dream), that I only got one down before I dropped to sleep, and the next morning you ought to have seen what a fright I looked. You know how high my forehead is, and shiny. Well, there I was with all that shining expanse and one little bob on the left temple, and I overslept on account of getting up so, and was late, and before I could do anything Charlie Brood was after me. How I felt you can imagine, for you look just as bad as I do without your crimps, and I just had to cry, and Joe came into my room, and I must say he was real kind if he was sarcastic. Of course I was so excited I out with the whole story, and he said I wasn't the only person whose religion was one-sided; but he said I mustn't go out looking

like a Jewish old-clothes woman (that was fearfully cutting, but I did look like one), and he just positively "scooted" down to Medina's and bought me a front-piece, which looks real nice. I offered to give it back to him to decorate his room with; but he says I can keep it for religious emergencies, and he calls it my "moral support." And he never told any of the rest of the family anything about it, though mother wondered what he was doing in my room so long. But here I am, at the end of all the sheets Joe says I can send for five cents, and I haven't told you a thing about what I am doing, only about what I haven't done; but if you take any notice of this letter and don't laugh at me, I'll write very soon again.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

II.

BOSTON, February, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

What with your dreadful procrastination, and the distance between Venice and Boston, I'd as lief correspond with the Sphinx. Before I can get your opinion on any subject I shall have forgotten all about the subject, I am afraid, and sha'n't know what you are talking about. You know I got into an *awful* squall with Betty Martin when she was travelling abroad. She wrote me that her engagement with Tom Oxford was all off, and, of course, I sat right down and wrote her a letter of sympathy. I remember I wrote her ten cents' worth; I've forgotten the number of pages, but it was a *real sweet* letter, and, do you know, it followed her round and round, from place to place, till at last, when she *got* it, she and Tom had made it all up and

were *reëngaged.* How mad she was! Naturally she *would* be, for I wrote her I thought he was a perfect *fool,* and she was lucky to get rid of him; that I did not *believe* he knew enough to mark his laundry-list, and I was quite *sure* he couldn't *pay* for it; that Joe said he always skinned round town on transfer checks, and he'd been trying to flirt with every girl in Boston since she'd gone. Of course I couldn't *blame* Betty; but you see my intentions were perfectly *honorable,* and I only *wished* to make her feel *pleasant* and *comfortable;* and, although I do not imagine for a *moment* that anything so horrible could happen between *you* and *me,* my dearest Poesie, it is just as well to let you *realize* how *painful* and *uncertain* such a correspondence may be. Now, you see, I *may* go on telling you all my Self-Improvement and Charity feelings; and after I have exposed *all* my inner feelings to you I may get *such* a squelcher from you, when if you were only *here* I should know at *once* your true feelings with-

out exposing myself to ridicule. But you *will* think I am *never* going to tell you what progress I have made.

Well, to begin. Of course I couldn't give up *everything* at once; nobody *supposes* I'm a *saint* (say, would Saint Peppermint sound funny?), and ma says it isn't well to be *too* intense over anything, but I found I could spare an hour or so on Wednesday mornings just as well as not; so Clara and I decided we would go either to the noon-day service at King's Chapel *or* the Emergency lectures at Trinity Chapel, only we couldn't seem to decide which would be the most enter — I was going to write entertaining; of course I meant *improving*. We talked it over such a *long* while. Of course I knew it would be perfectly beautiful, and so *right*, you know, to go to the noon-day service; and then it seems so sort of stylish and Episcopalian, and King's Chapel is so picturesque and English, that I always feel as if I must look like the girls in the *Graphic* or London

Times when I sit in the pews; but then the Emergency lectures are so useful and necessary. I've often wondered what I *should* do if I was ever with any one that was *in* an emergency. Joe says he hopes I'd go home as quick as I could, and leave them to themselves, especially if *he* was the one; but that don't alter the fact that I ought to know what to do it it *should* happen so.

Well, as I said, we couldn't decide. Joe heard us arguing (he was right behind us, going across the Common), and he suggested tossing up. Of course we wouldn't; but we said if the next pug-dog's tail that we met turned to the *right*, we'd go to the lecture; if to the *left*, to the service. So the next pug's tail was carefully inspected, and it turned to the *right*. And the noon-day service "got left." (Excuse the pun, my dear.) Well, after we'd bought our tickets you've no idea how sort of *superior* I felt. Of course I didn't say so to Clara, but I felt as if I came from Runover, and I kept

taking mine out and looking at it so much that Joe said I'd start with a little emergency of my own by getting to the door without any ticket if I didn't let up. He said lots of disagreeable things about our forgetting that it would be all ladies (just as though we *cared*), and to be sure and not give up our checks, and when I asked him to get us some note-books he said to take a visiting card. But we *got* our note-books, nevertheless, and I covered mine with tan-colored satin and embroidered "Emergency Lectures" on the back and some wild roses; but I took it off, for I found that Clara wasn't going to cover hers, and I wanted to pretend I didn't care to cover mine. Runover girls never cover things or tie bows on. *I* don't know why, and I don't believe *they* do; but they never do, and it is absolutely *painful* sometimes to see them. They are all one shining mass of respectability and "I'm-not-like-other-girls-ativeness." Really, I am as coy about meeting Runover girls as Susie Green is about *cows*.

I met one (a Runover girl, not a cow) at Maud Tuff's, a week or so since, and she interviewed me on the newspapers of Boston. (Honestly, it is just like an interview; you feel as if you were to be reported.) She asked me which had the most condensation. I don't know *why* I said it; if I had *thought* a moment I *shouldn't*, but I didn't *quite* "catch on" to the word, and it just occurred to me that she meant the pulp, or the fibre, or whatever you call it, and so I up and said, real sympathetic, that I liked the *Advertiser* best for curl-papers, but the *Globe* made the best bustles. There, this ?!?!?!!! just expresses the way she looked at me. She didn't look *scornful* exactly or *severe*, but I felt as if she'd been jerked away from me just as they pull up the fairies in spectacular plays, and you don't know where they've gone or how they got there. So I am mighty careful now how I talk. Joe says I'd better study up a little, and not get all broke up again, for I

nearly had hysterics over it, it was so sort of funny, and yet she looked so tragic about it. Shouldn't you think she might have had a *little* fellow-feeling, even if she *hasn't* any use for curl-papers and bustles?

I declare! I run on so I forgot all about the lectures. Well, we went, and after I got in I was *so* gratified to think I had decided on going there; for when I saw all the colored maps, or whatever they are, of the human body, all marked out in red, white, and blue, I felt that it was all so *horrid* it must be *very* imposing. Dr. Richardson was just as nice as *could* be, and made everything just as *plain*, and he did it all in such a nice, casual way, as much as to say, "Of course you know all this already, but I'll just brush you up a little," which was so comforting and pleasant; for of course we, or at least *I*, *didn't* know whether my thorax was in my brain or my ankle, although I'd have *died* before I'd have acknowledged it. Then he told us all about

stopping bleeding, and I nearly choked myself after I got home trying to find the place in my throat to press in case I cut the — *corroded* artery, is it? — something like that. I couldn't swallow for ever so long. But I had the greatest time taking notes. You see I forgot all about it till I saw all the girls and ladies going it like everything, and I don't see how they could do it and watch Dr. Richardson too, and I looked over Clara's shoulder, and she was making lots of little jiggers like Chinese letters. She said it was short-hand, but between *you* and *I*, Poesie Plympton, I don't believe she *knew* what she was writing any more than *I* did; but there's the church-bell, and I must stop. S. Y. L.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

III.

BOSTON, February, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I left you *so* abruptly in my last letter that it made me feel as I used to when I lived out in Newton, and seemed to spend my whole *life* in catching trains, and I'd leave you standing right in the middle of the sidewalk, and make a wild and breathless dash for the cars, which were always *way* out at the extreme end of that old Columbus-avenue station. Do you remember that time I went down those old stairs lickety-wallup, and bumped into that old party who was evidently running for the *Providence* station, and we were both so *polite*, and yet so *earnest*, that we kept bobbing the same way simultaneously, and the people in the cars *smiled* so? I could have *killed* the brakeman that day for not letting me ride out all the way

on the platform. As it was, I didn't stop blushing till I got out to Chestnut Hill. As I said, I left you *very* abruptly in my letter, and *nothing* but the *church-bell* would have induced me to do so; but ma always *insists* on my getting to church before the service begins, for she says it is *just* as impolite and unnecessary to be late to church as it is to go late to a *concert* or *theatre*. You know ma is almost *rabid* on good-breeding, and she says it is the very height of *ill-breeding* to make *other* people uncomfortable; but when I tell her she is ill-bred, then, toward *me* she just smiles and says, "Fiddlesticks!"—which you know *means* a great deal, though it *sounds* simple. I *must* tell you that since you were here our minister has instituted a new idea of about four minutes for *silent prayer*, and it is perfectly *wearing* on my *nerves*. I know you will say I am perfectly *depraved*, but I can't help it. No matter *how* good and *how* earnestly I have been listening to the sermon I *always* have to giggle when he announces "a

few moments of silent prayer." I *never* can think *what* to think of, and I *suppose* it *is* hysterical, but I *can't* help wanting to holler out, "Cheese it!" and see them all hop, — minister and all, — for ministers are not so calm and placid as they'd have you *think;* they are just as nervous and afraid of possible dangers as *any one.*

Mr. Luther was preaching one day on the pleasantness of death and the calm cheerfulness we ought to feel, and just then the sexton shut a register with a bang, and you *ought* to have seen the old gentleman hop, and I *guess* he is just as much afraid of his latter end as everybody *else.* It is just so with doctors; they will tell folks just as *easy* to give up tea and coffee, and candy, and butter, and *all* the things that make life worth *living;* but I see *them* giving them up! But speaking of doctors reminds me that I didn't finish telling you about the Emergency lectures. The second one we had was by Dr. Cheever, and it was perfectly

lovely, it was so horrible; that is, I mean it was lovely to be so *improved*, and to know just *everything* about what *might* happen, and what *does* happen, only we are apt to live so *lightly* and *carelessly*, I suppose, that we don't think of such things till they come home to us. They have a small boy at the lectures to illustrate on, and I *declare* the first time he came on I thought they *must* have got him out of some of the Charles-river bath-houses, for he didn't have *any* clothes on except a bathing-suit, and I should have *thought* he would have *frozen;* and I hope they paid him well for standing up there and being all daubed up with red paint, just as if he was turned inside out, and being punched and squeezed and laid out on a board as if there wasn't anything *alive* about him; but he was just as *nice* a little fellow as could be, and looked like one of those "Italian heads" you see in picture-shops.

They also had a skeleton hanging right on the corner of the organ. I got quite well ac-

quainted with him by the *second* lecture; but at first, when they acted so familiar with him, I couldn't see *how* they *could*. I've wondered ever since *who* it was *once*. Clara tried to explain to me that it *probably* wasn't anybody, but was made up; but I don't *believe* it was, for I *couldn't* help *imagining* that it was a young man I used to meet at parties; and that night when Joe jumped at me out of the vestibule I *yelled so* loud Joe asked me if I learned *that* at the lecture, and if that was the Emergency yell. But I learned *lots* and *lots*. I know how to do *everything*, and it seems *so* strange so *many* people die when it is so *easy* to *stop* them. I'm just going to buy *everything* the doctors told us about, from a dredging-box to one of those things that look like a shawl-strap. I can't *think* of the name of it, but it is something to put round you and screw up so as not to bleed to death. I *tried* to take *notes*. Clara told me (she knows *everything*, you know) to just take *heads* of different important

things they spoke of, and then write it out after I got *home*.

Well, I *tried* it, and *when* I got home Joe asked to see my note-book, and you *ought* to have heard him laugh. Of course I wasn't very much *used* to it, and all I had in was, "Bones," "Blood," and "Rail-fence;" and I *couldn't* think *what* I had "Rail-fence" in for till I remembered that Dr. Lyman said that if a person *should* be out walking and *did* break a leg, one *might* take a rail out of a fence to bandage it on. Joe says he should judge I could get some *very* clear idea of the course of lectures from those three notes, and he wants me to wear the Esmarch bandage I bought there, for a fichu; but I don't care! I am *improved*, aint I, Poesie, dear? And I am just dying for an emergency to just *show* them if I *don't* know all about it. Joe says his last prejudice against the ballot for women has been swept away, for he stepped into the lecture one day and looked round, and he said

when he saw so many *seemingly* pretty, delicate women fairly *gloating*, as he expressed it, over broken bones and bursted arteries, and hanging and drowning and poisoning, and swallowing it all without a *wink*, and actually taking *notes* of it, he said he concluded they were perfectly able to run the country. Humph! He *thinks* that was *awfully* cutting.

Another thing Clara and I are *deeply* interested in is "The Discriminating Charities." The "discriminating" means that they are *very* particular, and will on *no* account *help* a person unless they are sure the person is worthy of it. Why, ma had a woman come to the front door one *awful* night, and she said her sufferings were too *deep* and too *long* to tell of, but if ma would, in God's name, give her one dollar she would never lose it in this world or the world to come. Of course ma gave it to her, but she wrote right off to the Discriminating Charities and inquired about her; and, do you

know, they are so *very* anxious that no one shall be *imposed* on and everything be *sure*, that they took three whole weeks to find out *all* about that woman, — what her maiden name was, and what county she came from in Ireland, and her children's ages to a *day;* and they said she had a drunken husband, who was only good-natured *when* he was drunk, and when he was sober he beat her; and Joe said as they sent him to the Island as soon as he was good-natured the poor woman couldn't seem to rope ir any domestic felicity at all; and they said her boys were perfect roughs, and always abusing her, and they shouldn't advise helping such a person *at all.* So you *see* how *particular* the society is, and what a *noble* work it is doing, and I will tell you later how Clara and I are *working* for it.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

P.S. — That I wrote about living carelessly I got out of a Young Ladies' Guide. I thought I'd tell you for fear you'd think something ails me.

IV.

BOSTON, February, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I *was* going to write to you about the slumming Clara and I did for the Discriminating Society, but I have been so excited and interested over the Dickens Carnival that I feel I *must* write you about it. *Such* an exciting time as I had, and *all* because I went without a *man*. I *never* believed before that any time *without* a man *could* be exciting. You see, Clara went up to Runover last Saturday to *meet* some individual; they are always *meeting* some one in Runover, and when I first knew Clara I felt very deficient to think *I* never had met any one, and I felt as if I ought to hustle round and do something about it; but I didn't know of any one at that time (Joe suggested Daniel Pratt to me. Humph!), and, in fact, I haven't *since*. Of

course Clara is real kind, and doesn't *say* anything about it; but I know she feels *immeasurably* superior to me, and now she has gone to meet *another* celebrity I shall feel *smaller* than *ever*. (Dick Hascot just went by; he does bow *so beautifully*, for he wears his collars so high he has to turn his whole body toward one if he even *glances* at them, and it gives him such an air of *deference*.)

Well, I thought while Clara was away *I'd* do something smart to make up for her old individual, and as Runover girls all think it is high-minded and superior to go about without a man. (Charlie Brood and I have decided that there is a very good *reason* for it; as for *my* part, I think it is much pleasanter to have a gentleman to look out for you. I always *did* think so; and *now*, Poesie Plimpton, you may be dead sure that I'll *never, never* go to any more places evenings without one while my name is Peppermint Perkins, and after it *isn't* I'm sure I sha'n't.) Well, I asked Lillie Au-

burndale if she wouldn't go with me. (She isn't a *bit* like Runover girls, but she is what ma calls a *truly* independent girl. She does what she pleases that is *right* to do, because it's *convenient*, not because it is *smart*, and she never gets all broke up as those girls do who do it *purposely*.) She was quite pleased with the arrangement, and I kept just as mum about it to every one but ma, and she just smiled and said I might go.

First place, we got into a great puddle of water, because Lillie is near-sighted, and I felt so superior I didn't see it, and then the Huntington-avenue car came along, and we *couldn't* stop it. Lillie is so ladylike she *can't* holler, and I couldn't whistle, for it was *so* cold my lips wouldn't pucker, and we just stood there in the puddle, meekly waving our hands in speechlessness till *three* cars had gone by; and we would have had to walk, I believe, if a *man* hadn't come along and let out the most satisfactory "Hi, there!" you ever heard, and

stopped a car. When we got there I *couldn't* find my ticket, and while I was trying to find it I dropped my fan and my opera-glasses; and we didn't know whether we could check anything or not, so we just carried our old shawls and rubbers all the evening, and if we'd had a *man* he could have picked up all these things and checked the shawls, or else carried them for us; and we had to stand up for *three straight hours*, because we had no *man* to get us chairs, and all the time, right before my eyes, I had Susie Green with Charlie Brood. *She* had a seat found for her in the balcony, and *her* fan, and opera-glasses, and other belongings were picked up when they dropped. *She* didn't have to get her face red, and bump her bonnet crawling about after them, and *she* had interesting remarks made to her.

Girls *never* can make interesting remarks to each *other*. Well, I don't care! *I* could have gone with him if I'd wanted to. Everything else was real nice every way *until*—

now, hold your breath, Poesie, dear — until the curtain caught a-fire! Now, hasn't every one always told you that in a moment of danger to your life your past sins of omission and commission all pass before you, and that you think all sorts of elevated things? Well, do you know, all I thought of when I saw those little sprays of flame hopping like little gleaming fiends all up that curtain, with all that timber behind it, and I heard that sort of suppressed groan and roar that went round, all I thought of was what a *fool* I was to go without a *man;* but I never said a word or made the least movement, and I don't think any one did; and ma says it was a better proof of the culture of Boston audiences than anything else that was ever brought forward. Everything was over in a few minutes, the fire put out, and the band played "Yankee Doodle."

Talk about monkeys, why, a monkey's climbing is *nothing* to the way that a nice fireman

shinned up those sides and *pulled* that unfortunate curtain down; and all the gentlemen acted so quickly and calmly, and it *must* have dirtied their cuffs so. It was too bad for all the *dramatis personæ*, and I know they must have felt that their legs and arms were superfluous when they found themselves minus a curtain, but they soon recovered their self-possession, and rather *enjoyed* the *expose*, I guess. Everybody did well; though, of course, those who entered into the *spirit* of it were the most amusing. Of course Dickens's characters are so much read and talked about that unless they act *just* as they do in the books you are sort of *disappointed;* but I'm quite sure I couldn't have done a *thing* or *said* a thing if I had found myself on that stage with that mass of people *looking* at me. I think the *best* part was when they marched through the centre aisle of the hall, though. I *did* just wonder what those poor people did who were *not* in the centre aisle.

Lillie and I had to come *home* after that, because we did not have any *man* with us. Of course any of the boys would have gone home with us willingly; but you don't think I would have given in in *that* way — not if the court knows herself. But, Poesie dear, I never *did* in all my life see so many nice-looking gentlemen, young and old, all together. Perhaps I had grown morbidly envious of other girls (Joe says it was that); but I didn't know there was so much manly beauty in Boston. And then, to think of Lillie and I poking about all *alone*. And I had to have Lillie go home with me, although we passed her house first, because there was a man behind us who seemed to have his eye on me. At first, when Lillie called my attention to it, I said, "Goodness! don't find fault with *that!* I'm glad he's *got* his eye on us; if we'd had more masculine optics on us all the evening we'd have done better." But I was a little *nervous*, for all that, and when we'd got to my door I was so fidgety I slipped

on the coal-scuttle and sat *right* down, and slid down into the gutter (you *know* how the sidewalk slopes); and I don't know where I should have landed — I *might* have gone down the cesspool and landed on Moon Island, feet first, for aught I know, I felt *small* enough — if this man hadn't stuck his cane in front of me, and stopped me in my mad career. Said he, "Are you going far?" and I saw it was Joe — the hateful thing! He said I seemed somewhat confused, and he picked my fan out of the middle of the street, and stood fanning me there on the sidewalk till I was as *mad!* And then he said if we girls were sure we'd got enough of our — *pure cussedness* he called it, would we accept the *unnecessary*, but often *acceptable*, escort of a gentleman down to Parker's, and have a little something to eat. And he called a herdic, and ma came out (put-up job, I believe); but we all had a lovely time, only I'll *never* tell Clara about the grand finale.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

V.

BOSTON, February, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

You know I *intended* to tell you about our charitable work in my last letter. (I always like to explain the *connection* between the end of one letter and the beginning of the next, for those continued stories always make me mad, same as that one we read that left off one month, "She raised her dagger high in the air."

"Continued in our next."

And then the next month it commenced, "She dropped it," and we couldn't think *what* she dropped for the longest while, for we couldn't get the back number; but then that is the way that poor Schehera something saved her *head* from being chopped off, and I suppose it is the only way in which publishers keep

their *bread* and *butter* from being cut off; for if a chapter left off in any *kind* of a calm and easy way we wouldn't care anything about the next one, *would* we?) Where was I? Oh, yes! You see the committee appeal to people of leisure to visit among the poor, and Clara and I felt that we *ought* to offer, because it was so *right* to do so, and the committee were real polite to us, and gave us the names of two or three families that we might visit. One was a sick woman, with several children; another was an invalid young man; and there was another family that they wanted us to *investigate*.

Clara and I felt rather aghast at *investigating*, because we thought it meant to find out their ancestors, and where they came from, and where their children were born, and all *that;* but they said we needn't do *that*, only just to *cautiously* look into their *general circumstances*, and get some *idea* of them. So I thought we could do that; for Clara is *so*

genteel and lady-like, and her glasses give her *such* an "I'm-not-at-all-giddy-but-very-nice-and-respectable" air, that we might get on nicely. So I said we would take those three families, and you don't *know*, Poesie, dear, how much like Mrs. Burdett-Coutts and Florence Nightingale and all those lovely women I felt. Then I started out the first morning, and my intentions were *so* good, and I thought I was going to do *so* right, that if I *didn't* just exactly *succeed*, I oughtn't to be utterly *laughed* at, ought I, Poesie, dear?

Anyway, I dressed just as plain and shabby as I could, because I didn't want the poor things to contrast *my* clothes with *theirs;* but I wished I hadn't, for they are *very* critical, do you know, and the first thing the children did was to say, "Humph! Guess them are cheaps;" and I could see they looked sort of disappointed, and we didn't seem to have so much influence over them as Maud Tuff always seems to have, and *she* goes dressed in her

very *best*, though I always thought her very *heartless* to do so. I tried to be just as *sweet* and *gentle* as I could, but I didn't know how to begin to *investigate*. This was the new family. There was a woman and a young girl and an old man, and they seemed to be rather comfortable, and looked so self-possessed I didn't know exactly what to *do* about them. I sort of expected they would need something *awfully*, and it would be such a pleasure to relieve them; but they didn't "agonize for a cent," as Joe expresses it, and Clara and I just stood like that fellow in the poem who just

> "Stood a spell on one foot fust,
> And then a spell on t'other;
> And on which foot he felt the wust;
> He couldn't 'a' told you nuther."

But finally it got so *bad* that Clara settled her glasses firmly on her nose, and said in a sort of a weakly severe tone, "Is there anything we can do for you?" Then the old man spoke up,

"Yes, git out!" Of course, I suppose he was sort of *cranky*, and he didn't know what he *was* saying, and we needn't have *minded;* but he looked so sort of fierce, and he had such a big cane, and the women both seemed to sort of *smile*, so that Clara and I just walked out as quick as we could, and got off of *that* street. Well, then we thought we would take in the invalid young man; but we went into an apothecary store and talked over our plan of action a little while, for Clara said it would never do to back out *again*, and not have any report to give. You see they gave us a little book in which to write down notes and what people wanted. I said, "Let's write down they wanted us to 'git out;'" but Clara *never* jokes. She very seldom laughs. Runover girls *never* do; they keep sort of a sarcastically superior smile on that doesn't show their teeth at all, and makes one feel awfully cheap who is grinning from ear to ear. Joe says they can't laugh on account of their glasses falling off, but I think

it is because they don't want to appear to have anything in *common* with you.

Well, Clara thought we had better go in sort of *easy* and *pleasant*, tell him that we had a little superfluous literature, and we thought that he might like some (we had some books and flowers with us) to wile away his illness. I told Clara *she* would have to say it, for I never could get off "superfluous literature" in the *world;* but she put me right down by saying that was only *her* way of phrasing it, — I needn't use those *words*, — and we were to stay a few moments and then "trickle out," as Dr. Prance says in "The Bostonians." (I don't suppose you can reach *The Century* way off in that old sloppy Venice, but "The Bostonians" is — well, it is just Bostonese.) And if it came in *right* we were to leave a few *flowers*. I saw some nice-looking cigars in the show-case, and I couldn't help thinking that *Joe* liked a good smoke when *he* was sick, but I didn't dare to speak of it to Clara.

We had some trouble finding the house, for you never *saw* such places. I don't see how the poor things know the difference, and I should *think* the *children* would get all mixed up; and I tell you, Poesie Plympton, you would have been pleased to have seen your Peppermint ascending and descending stairs with a "lofty mean" like Samantha's, a bunch of flowers in one hand, and a package of books in the other.

Finally we found the place and tapped at the door. We had previously asked an old woman *where* the sick young man lived, and she said he was in that room; "sick enough, I guess," she said, with sort of a dreadful leer; and I told Clara perhaps he was *too* sick, and although I wanted to do *right*, I did not feel quite able to see a man in a *dying condition*. But Clara seemed quite determined, and so we rapped. We didn't have any response, so we *kept* rapping; and finally we went in, and there was the *handsomest* young man, Poesie, dear, you *ever*

saw, fast asleep. Clara and I just stood and *glared* at him. I guess he was an Italian; anyway, he looked like those tenor opera singers, and just reminded me (don't tell Joe I ever *mentioned* him, for I *never* would hear the last of it) of young Salvini. He sat in a chair, with his head leaning on a table, and didn't move.

I whispered to Clara we wouldn't *wake* him, but just leave some flowers by his side, and a book, — it would surprise him so *pleasantly* when he awoke; and, really, he was so nice-looking I shouldn't have known what to have said to him. Joe says I could have asked him if he'd been to many germans this season, and if he liked the "Widow Wyse," and who he thought wrote "Buntling Ball." You know how Joe *talks*. Well, we crept in, and I told Clara the room looked awfully funny for a *sick* room; but she is so near-sighted she can't see, so I selected the prettiest flowers I had and just laid them on the table beside of his head, and

"BEUSHFUL GURLS."—p. 46.

was just going to take a book out of the parcel when he began to stir, and then he raised his head and looked at us, and do you *know*, Poesie, dear, that man was just as *drunk* as he could *be*, and we had got into the wrong room. He began to say, "Beushful gurls;" and Clara and I ran as fast as we could run, and all the people in that house only *laughed* at us. Well, Clara commenced to criticise *me*, and I commenced to criticise *her;* but we didn't dare to be very impolite to each other, for neither of us would have dared to have been left to go home alone. And we determined to try the sick woman with the children, although we felt dreadfully *discouraged*. But *she did* seem to be satisfactorily *poor*. We picked up her room for her, and took down a list of some things she wanted, and then one of the children said she wanted to go to Sunday school, only she didn't look nice enough; and Clara and I arranged that we would take her up-town, and fix her up at our *own* expense, because the society

probably wouldn't want to do that without asking.

So we put on her hat and started, and we were so *glad* we went there to have a chance of doing so *much good*. She was so pleased with everything, it was fun to see her look. We were going to take her to Jordan & Marsh's or White's, or some of those places, to clothe her up; but as we crossed over Tremont street into Temple place we met Dick Hascot and a *friend* of his from *New York*. He was just *elegant*, and they walked along with us. He had the *loveliest* eyes, and his whiskers were cut *so* English, and he wouldn't so much as let any one *brush* against you on the sidewalk; and you can *imagine* how he worked to accomplish that on *Temple place*, and Clara is much elated (*foolishly* so, *I* think) over Dick Hascot, anyway; and somehow we both felt so — *preoccupied* I suppose is the word, that we forgot *all about* that child, and we never laid our *eyes* on it again, for we never *dared* to go to the house again.

Of course we heard through the society that the child was found after a *while*, but the society ladies said that when we had had a little more *experience* we might be able to work some *more* for them, but at *present* we had better do some good in *another direction*. I asked Joe what he thought of it, and he said he thought the expression "another direction" was *good*, and if I took it as a sarcasm it was not their fault. Clara is much worked up over it; it seems to detract from her dignity so, and she looks at me, I can see, with a sort of "never go-with-*you*-again" air, when she is *no* smarter, and acted *just* as flat as I did, if she is from Runover. Didn't she, Poesie, dear?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

VI.

BOSTON, March, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I have been very much perplexed in my mind as to whether or no I would observe Lent. It seems so dreadfully stylish to do so, and yet I was afraid something *might* come up that I should want to go to, and then I should regret having commenced *at all*. I always *did* wish though, and often tell ma so, that we were Episcopalians, it seems to relieve you of *so* much responsibility, and Lent, like charity, covers such a *multitude* of sins, if you observe it. It must be so nice and comfortable to have your prayers all laid out for you to say, and even your sins are all carefully arranged in order so you don't have to think them all out. All you have to do is to sort of think to

yourself, "Yes, that's all right; I agree to it all." Something like putting your name to a paper that is all drawn up for you and there's the end of it, and you don't have to rummage round your brain to find just what you *do* think and just what sins you *are* guilty of; and it is just as well, for I guess every one's sins of omission and commission are all alike, and we all think the same things; don't you think so, Poesie, dear? But as long as I'm *not* an Episcopalian, ma said she thought it would be rather silly to profess much abstinence from the world, the flesh, and the devil. She says she thinks a little fasting occasionally is good for *any one's* stomach, especially in the spring, and religious services *never* do any harm; but she said I had best think awhile before I made up my mind to give up *dancing* and *theatres* for six weeks, especially when I have so many friends who are not Episcopalians. She said I'd better *try* it, though, and so I

commenced by going with Clara to morning service.

Of course it was *beautiful*, but I had no idea it would make me feel so *homesick*. I couldn't realize that it was a week-day, and not Sunday, and everybody looked so sort of subdued, and as if something was going to *happen*, that I felt real doleful, and although I didn't dare to explain my feelings to Clara (she is a *tremendous* Episcopalian) I just asked her if she would go down to Stearns's with me to get some buttons for a new white dress I was having made. She asked me what my *hurry* was, and what I wanted the dress for; and, do you know, Poesie, dear, I didn't *dare* to tell her that I had even *thought* of going to a party the next week with Charlie Brood; so I *prevaricated*, as you might say, a little, and told her I was getting it ready for summer, and she said she guessed I could get them some other time; but I felt that if I didn't get down-town

somewhere I should have the blues, and so I told her I wanted an invisible net and some hair-pins.

I thought she *couldn't* find fault with *those*, for a lady can't let her hair tumble down, if it is Lent, *can* she, Poesie, dear? I could see that she suspected my motives, but I guess, between you and I and the Frog Pond, she was as glad of a little shake off to her feelings as I was. And we walked across the Common pretty lively, and it seemed *so* good to be in Temple place, — you know no one could *ever* feel lonely there; the idea is *absurd*, although it *did* look dreary one day this winter, when it was so cold the shop windows were all frosted as if you were on Mount Washington, and the store-keepers put little lamps in rows in the front to melt the frost, so people could see, just as if people would stop, when they knew the thermometer was way down to *nothing*, to look in the windows; but I suppose it is *enterprising* to do so (to have the lamps, I

mean). Well, we went into Stearns's, and I bought my hair-pins and invisible nets; and while I was buying them I saw some *lovely* white buttons, that would have looked *so* scrumptious on my new dress. But Clara looked so sort of solemn with her prayer-book in her hand that I didn't *dare* to say anything about it. It was still very early, and I didn't want to go home, for you see I had nothing to *do* at home if there was nothing to get *ready* for, — no parties, nor anything, — and it made me feel rather lost; so I asked Clara if she would mind going into Dooling's, and eating some *éclairs*. She didn't say she *wouldn't*, but she looked as if she thought it was such an *impious* thing to do that *I* became very "meachin," and said *I* wouldn't, I guessed. Then we saw some lovely red roses on the corner that a boy had to sell, and I brightened up considerably, and told Clara I'd "shout," and we'd decorate ourselves; and, do you know, that girl said she wouldn't wear flowers during Lent.

I was so *mad* I started to tell her she'd better go over and sit on the Cogswell fountain, and be a little tombstone all by herself, and *done* with it; but I was half afraid of her, I think, for I didn't say it. I only asked her meekly if she minded looking in the windows a little. She said "No," sort of sad and sweet and patronizing, and so we strolled back down Temple place; and I looked in Dooling's and Weber's windows till my mouth fairly *watered*, and I believe I counted every *article* in Zinn's window, and I saw so *many* things I wanted to buy, but I never *dared*. When we came to Simpson's glove store all those gloves, of course, just made me think of theatres and parties, and I thought then I wasn't going to any for six weeks, and just then an old hand-organ struck up "Sweet By and By;" and, Poesie, dear, I felt so *dreary* and *disconsolate* I could have *cried;* but I knew that I was *very* foolish, and that if I intended to improve myself morally and intellectually I must not

give out so *easily;* so I asked Clara *pleasantly* what we could do *next,* and she said she guessed we'd better go home. She was reading the biography of George Eliot, and she wanted to practise a symphony; and she couldn't spend any more time on the street.

Well, I did feel annihilated, but I thought *I* could go home and read something and be superior; so I humbly asked her if she would walk home by the Public Garden, so we could see the boys skating. But, do you know, she seemed to think that I was so silly I began to be mad, and just then I saw Maud Tuff coming, and she looked so nice and happy, with a big bunch of roses on, and she waved her muff at me to stop, and she came over and said she was going to have a theatre party that evening, and wouldn't I come "at a pinch," as another girl she asked had given out, and she had just been round to ask ma; and, do you know, I forgot all about the Lent business and only felt how jolly everything seemed

again, and I just said "Good-by, Clara," for Maud asked me to go with her to buy some slippers, and Clara adjusted her glasses firmly and started home, while Maud and I (I looked first to see if Clara had got out of sight) skipped over to Dooling's and had some lunch (ma doesn't approve of any lunching down-town *often*, but I felt like doing something *howling*), and then we went shopping a little, and I bought me some gloves of Miss Fisk (although I felt sort of guilty doing it), and I had such a *lovely* time; and I don't believe I was wicked at all, do you, Poesie, dear?

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

VII.

BOSTON, March, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I had almost made up my mind not to tell you about what I'm going to; but I finally concluded to do so, for I think it is *unkind* to doubt a friend's love for you, and you are my *true* friend, — aren't you, Poesie, dear? — and I don't believe you will ever laugh at your Peppermint. You see it all happened in this way: Clara and I wanted some pussy-willows. Clara says *now* she didn't want any, *I* was the one that proposed it; but at any rate *some one* proposed going for them, and Joe said *he* would go along too. I didn't care much to *have* him, but I knew he wanted to show off his new reefer to Clara, and as ma says one of the chief duties of a woman is to seem apparently *oblivious* of a man's little follies and

reasonably *indulgent* of them, I didn't say anything unfavorable to his going, and we started one of those days when it seems like spring till you get round the corner.

The wind just *tore* across the river, and Clara's nose and mine got *so* red, and we looked *so* homely, that we were thankful there were not many people to meet. But the sky did look *lovely*, and the little birds and the mud made me think of having my summer clothes made. We walked way out over Beacon street, and kept on and on and on and on ever so far. I had on my old boots, so I didn't care *how* far we went, and Clara and Joe thought they looked *so* English. I snickered every time I got behind them. Clara's *usual* walk is like that of the majority of girls, — a cross between a hitch and a dawdle, but when she is "walking for the cake," as I call it, — that is, when she knows any one is looking, or when she is walking with a gentleman, it is simply — well, *large*, to see

her. You know she wears broad-toed boots with the vamp way up on her foot, and broad, low heels,—Runover girls *always* do, and there doesn't seem to be any more *sense* to it than to their not crimping their hair, that *I* ever see.

I know people say it is much more *sensible*, and Clara argues that it is more *artistic*, and trots out her old, flat-footed goddesses and mythological women to back her up. But *look* at them! They wore great long, trailing things to cover their feet up. But *I* say a girl nowadays who isn't a Juno or a what's-her-name (the one that secured the apple), and who has on a short, scant dress, requires more moral principle and Christian fortitude to cross over West street on a muddy day, with broad-soled, low-heeled boots on, than *your Peppermint* has got, and I'm not afraid to *say* it. If the Runover girls *want* to ker-flop round with their artistic(?) boots, *let* them. I prefer something that won't make you look as if you were just *weighted* to the ground.

"But I digress," as the stump speakers always say in the minstrel shows. Joe says I'm the biggest — is "digresser" proper? — anyway, he says I digress more than any one he ever saw. He says I started the other day to tell him about Susie Green's german, and I brought up in Charlie Brood's aunt's funeral. I don't *remember* doing it; but if I *did* there must have been something *very* interesting about the funeral. Well, now I *started* in to tell you — *didn't* I? — about our walk, and I'd got to where we walked ever so far. Well, finally we turned off down the road. I don't know to this day where it was, but it looked rural and nice, and Clara and I had brought our sketch-books, and we thought we saw the roof of an old farm-house, and we wanted to book it. Sketching is so *lovely*, I have taken it up since I began my self-improvement.

Joe says the amount of girls that are sitting round on walls and fences all over the country,

sketching the backs of farm-houses and barns, is something alarming; but I notice he is glad enough to have me pin my sketches up in his room, though unfortunately I got a little mixed over two of them. One of them was some water, but I couldn't think for the life of me if it was the St. Lawrence river or Strait's pond down to Nantasket; but Joe said it was no matter, water was water. The other one I *know* was a copy of a scene on the Rhine; but Joe *insists* it is the South Boston Iron Works, so I let him have his way. He says it is just as nice as the Rhine and he don't mind. He is one of that crowd that thinks the view from Cambridge bridge is just like something or other, and I can't say anything because I never was abroad; but just as though you travelled weeks and weeks, and paid so much money for nothing better than Cambridge bridge views, — not but what they are very *nice*, and Howells is always writing about them, and I'd believe *him* where I wouldn't Joe, of

course; but I tell ma I just want to see for *myself* sometime, but I wish *you* would just tell me what *you* think about it.

I wish you would tell me *lots* of things, because it is so nice to say "I have a friend in Venice who says she doesn't think so," or "she does think so," as the case may be; but be sure and write everything real *plain*, because I should hate to get anything wrong, and talk like Mrs. Gilflory does in "The Mighty Dollar," you know, about "the Moor of Venus" and "the coal horses of Rhodes;" though truly, now, I didn't see the joke till Clara explained it. Clara can *explain anything*. Runover girls *always* can. If you ever begin to say, "Can you tell me," they put on that sort of a patronizing, scornful air, as if they'd known things ever since they were *born*, and you ought to be ashamed that you didn't know them *too;* and it makes you feel sort of mean and put down so low that you never can get up again, especially if there are a lot of them together, because then

they sort of look at each other as if they never saw such ignorance, and were *surprised* at it.

Clara said, the other day, she didn't think there was any girl that ever graduated from *anywhere* but what had read Spenser's "Faery Queen," and I didn't give it away at all that *I* hadn't, and I got it, and tried to read it; but the spelling is so *awful*, and it is *so* silly, and you have to keep reading the foot-notes, till I felt as if I was cross-eyed looking up and down so much, that I just gave it up, and I kind of hinted round to some girls who weren't Run-over girls, and they said they didn't hardly know what it was, and that made me feel so comfortable, for a body don't mind being a good deal worse than *some* people if they are only not worse than *everybody;* for we can't all expect to be perfect, *can* we, Poesie, dear?

There, I declare I haven't told you a *thing* about what I was going to, and

I was *very* anxious to, because I wanted to see if you did think I wasn't *very, very* lacking in — Ma is calling me. Good-by, Poesie, dear.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

VIII.

BOSTON, March, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

What I was *going* to tell you in my last letter, only you see I got off on to another track, just exactly as you will start for *one* girl's house and bring up in *another's*, as I did the other day. I started to make a call out at Lexington, and just brought up in Harrison Square; for you see, I met — There, I'm going off *just* the same now — *aint* I? — as I *did*, just trying to *excuse* myself for doing so the other day, and it seems to me as if that is the way half the people *do* in this world. While they are excusing themselves for their sins, and *explaining* how they *came* to do so, they are sinning right over again *all* the time, just the same as Susie Green sat in front of me at the theatre,

one evening, with a young man cousin of hers from New Hampshire; and, of course, Susie wasn't *to blame*, it's only her *way;* but you know how fast she talks, and the poor fellow wasn't *used* to it, and I saw him commence to wilt, and Joe leaned over to Susie and asked her why she didn't change seats with her cousin, his *other* ear would be fresher; and Susie was so distressed to think she had been talking so much that she commenced to explain and apologize to the poor fellow, and she never stopped all the evening. I could hear her voice, when we were going home, all the way up West street, apologizing and hoping he "hadn't noticed it!" Joe wanted to follow them right home; he said he wanted to be "in at the death," and see where the fellow dropped; but I wouldn't let him, for, although Susie isn't always kind to *me*, I wouldn't be so unkind to *her* as to walk home right behind her when she was with a young gentleman, even if he *is* only

her cousin. I've got my opinion of girls who will do such a thing as that.

Well, it is just as Joe says, I never *can* "keep my subject well in hand," as they say of lectures. Now, I *will* tell you what happened to Joe, and Clara, and I, *when* we *went* for *pussy-willows.* I left you right in the middle of that rural side street, didn't I? Weren't you cold waiting there all this time? You see we saw a lovely bush over in a field, and Clara said those would be just prime to carry home. Of course *she* didn't say "prime." She *never* says such words, but she said words to that *effect.* She says *now* she never said anything at all; but of course she *did,* or Joe never would have done what he did, for, although he is as good a brother as a girl can *expect nowadays* to have, he *isn't* given, as you might say, to gratifying my every *wish;* and if *I* had been the one that had said they were nice, very likely Joe would have said

they looked *too* nice to cut, or he was afraid the field was *swampy*, or something of that kind; but, when *Clara* said it, it was *different*, you know.

Of course I don't like to be mean about him, but he *is* getting fat. It isn't merely *stout*, it is real *fat*, and I don't think fat men ought to try to be agile, and swing round much, do you? They ought to be content with looking dignified and wise. Of course they may not know a *thing*, but they can't *help looking* as if they did, and they ought to keep up appearance, and not go jumping about like *slim* fellows. But Joe went ahead just as giddy as a young *calf*, and skipped over the wall, and right into a woodchuck hole, of *course*. He pulled himself out of it pretty quick and hopped along; but I knew by the position of his elbows that he was — well, *swearing*, and I felt real sorry that he hadn't taken down the bars of the fence and gone in nice and easy, as a fat man *ought to;* but you know the story of the old

man who always said there was a woman at the bottom of everything unfortunate, and it was *Clara* that was at the bottom of that woodchuck hole.

Well, the poor fellow got over to the pussy-willow bush, and the best branches were pretty high, and he commenced to climb up on that little jiggling bush, and I stood just all over gooseflesh to *see* him, but I did not *dare* open my mouth, for ma says never to disturb a man when he is trying to show off, — he will always *dislike* you for it; and I believe it is so, for there is Cora Shallow, she is always *reminding*, as you might say, her husband, "Godfrey, dear, *don't* try to ride that high-spirited horse, you *know* how you fell off last summer." — "Godfrey, dear, *don't* handle that revolver, you *know* you don't know anything about firing." Joe said he should think he'd *learn* enough about it to shoot *her* in the head, and I'm really afraid he'd *like* to. Well, I didn't dare say anything to Joe, and Clara stood there as serene and

placid as an old cow. Runover girls *never* show any emotion; it isn't well bred, it's silly, and lots of other things, they think. *I* think it's because they are sly and don't want you to know *what* they think, *anyway*. I always think so of *every one* that never flourishes round or gesticulates any, and preserves the same expression of countenance, no matter whether you tell them their petticoat is coming off, or ask them to have a glass of soda.

Well, Joe managed to hang on to the bush *some* way, though he can't climb any more *now* than a lobster could; and, to make matters a little *worse*, I saw him take out his knife to cut the switches with, and I had just made up my mind I *would* holler, when *off* he went, and I knew he must have hurt himself, for he was all in a little heap — or, rather, a *big* one. I don't know, Poesie Plympton, *how* I got over that fence. I've got sort of a vague remembrance of being way up high on something very narrow, and thinking how horridly my boots

looked, and how glad I was that Charlie Brood or none of the boys were there to see them; and then I jumped, and it seemed as if my hip bones went up to my ears, and it was such an *awful* jump. But I knew I *must* get to Joe, and I thought *here* was the long-sought-for opportunity to just show them I *had* profited by the Emergency lectures, and *could* do something; and all the way across the field I was thinking how *glad* I was I had been. Still, I hoped Joe wasn't *very* badly off, and when I saw that he was sitting up against a tree I was quite relieved.

But, O Poesie, there was blood, real *blood* — ugh! — coming out of his arm, and his sleeve was all stripped up and his foot was all doubled up under him, and he looked *awfully*. I'd no *idea* that people in an emergency looked so awfully. Now those men on the Esmarch bandages looked as calm and collected; — but then, they'd *been* all done up, when I come to think of it, and poor Joe *hadn't*.

"O Joe!" said I, "what *can* I do for you? Is it arterial or the other kind of blood?" And I couldn't for the life of me think *which* the doctor said spurted, and which dripped, and whether when it *spurted* you ought to do it up below the cut, or whether when it *dripped* you ought to; and I wondered which it did do *anyway*, and I asked Joe, and he didn't answer me, and I could see it was bleeding all the time; and I asked Clara if *she* could tell, and if she'd got her notes with her, and she just looked at me so scornfully and said, "How silly you" — and then she began to glare and turn white and over *she* went in a dead faint.

Now, wasn't it *mean* of her to leave me all alone so with Joe, especially when *she* was the one that had taken the notes at the lectures, and *I* hadn't? and how was I to know just as quick as a wink which kind of blood it was, and remember where to do it up? and how *could* I do it up with his coat-sleeve all hanging round it so, and we way off in a field, with no rubber

tubing or anything? and if I *had* had I never would have dared to use it, for Dr. Cheever said it would be dangerous to leave it on *too* long, and I couldn't remember how long you *ought* to leave it on, and I couldn't ask Clara if *she* remembered, for there she was, no good at *all*, and I'd forgotten if I'd ought to lay her out flat or sit her up, because I couldn't think whether the doctor said fainting was caused *by* blood *in* the brain or blood *out* of it, and if Joe hadn't been *kind* enough to brace up and tie up his *own* arm (it wasn't very bad, after all, it was his ankle that hurt him so), and tell me what to do with Clara, she kept going off so, we might have been in that field to this *day*, for all I know; but Joe hollered to a man passing by to get us some sort of a carriage to get home in, and we got home all right, only I didn't speak to Clara for a *week*, it seemed so mean of her to act as she did.

She says a person isn't responsible for a

delicate organization, and Joe says, "Certainly not, nor lack of brains either;" though I shouldn't think he'd infer that of Clara, should you?—for I know he doesn't mean *me*, though I thought he did at *first*, because he says it was real thoughtful of me to ask him what I should do for him, for if I'd done the wrong thing how *bad* it would have been. Wasn't he nice?

Yours,

PEPPERMINT.

IX.

BOSTON, April, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

You mustn't think I am getting strong-minded and *fierce* by my *saying* it, and of course I shall *always* remember what *ma* says, that if ever I marry I must *remember* that the man is the head of the house, and pays the bills, and in that position ought to command respect and be allowed reasonable privileges *about* the house. But I *must* say that as long as Clara Smart was the one that *made* Joe *get* into that woodchuck hole, she ought to just come and take *care* of his lame *ankle*. Not that I want to say anything disagreeable or unsisterly *about* Joe, because, as I have told you *lots* of times, he is just as good a brother as a girl can reasonably *expect* to have; but to have even the *best* of men round the house for a *week* makes

you feel *exactly* as you do in dog-days, when you never dare to *plan* anything, or to *lot* upon anything, the least *bit*, because you never know *when* it's going to *thunder*. Don't you think so, Poesie, dear?

The first day Joe was at home I thought it was *lovely*, and I was *so* mad at Maud Tuff because, when I told her he was going to be at home a week or so, she told me her house would be open to me *any* time, day or night, *during* that time, and not to hesitate to make it my refuge. But Maud *clearly meant* to be kind and sympathetic with me, and I feel *very* differently toward her from what I *did*. The *first* day Joe said it was nice, after all, for a fellow to have a nice sister, and he was afraid he hadn't appreciated me, nor how much ma and I *thought* of him; and we began to be sort of frightened and sad, and afraid he was going to die, — though we didn't know what *of*, for his *ankle* was only sprained; but he looked so sort of pale and meek, — but Maud Tuff says they

are *always* so the first day in. So I told every one I should not go out *anywhere* till Joe got well, I was going to amuse him and take care of him. And I got some of those *Harper's Bazars* that have the diet for invalids in them; but I couldn't exactly see that Joe needed *strengthening* any, so I didn't know what *to* do that would be real *nice*.

But I concluded to make him a little wine jelly *anyway*, so I commenced. Ma said I'd better let the *cook* make the jelly, and *I* go up and entertain Joe, for she had to go out. But I have always read that if one of the family is sick, that some one else of the family ought to prepare delicate food for them with their *own hands*. So Anna took all her vegetables and soup meat off the range, and I "started in," as Joe says. I was delayed a *little* because, first, I found my receipt-book was way up-stairs, and I had to go up and get it, and just as I was passing through the hall I looked out of the window, and Susie Green was just going

by with her new spring suit on, and I *couldn't* make out whether she had *one* or *two* biases in her jacket, and I wanted to *see*, because her clothes always fit *lovely*, and I am always studying them. I couldn't see though at all, but I wouldn't call her in, because I knew it would hinder my cooking, so I went right down then; but I had to send Anna down-town after a particular kind of a boiler that my receipt mentioned.

Anna didn't *want* to go. She said to use the farina boiler, it was just the *same;* but I didn't think it looked very clean; and then she said to put an empty lard-pail in the tea-kettle. But I knew she was jealous of my cooking, and didn't want it to *succeed*, so I said firmly, "No," she must get the *particular*, *precise* kettle I *wanted*. So, of course, that delayed *some;* but still it took me all the time she was gone to attend to the gelatine. Did you ever know how it acted? I soaked it *just* as it said, and then tried to dissolve it,

and had a horrible time; and then after I got it all done it wouldn't *stay* dissolved. Of course I took it *off*, because I knew Anna wouldn't be there for some *time*, and it stiffened right up again; and then I *thought* I saw her coming, and put it *on* again, and melted the old thing; and it *wasn't* Anna, and I had to take it *off* again, and I did that half-a-dozen times, till it shrunk or something, and I was afraid it wouldn't be enough, so I put a little more water to it; but after Anna came and I got it all made, it wouldn't stiffen, so I *suppose* I got too much water in; so I mixed up a little more *gelatine*, and put it in while Anna was down cellar, for I was determined it should be *nice*.

I had just got it into the mould when the clock struck one, and poor Joe sent down to see if he could have his dinner before long. I hadn't thought of his *dinner* at *all*, because you see I was so determined he should have some wine jelly, and it *was* too bad, because

of course the vegetables were not done, and he had to wait till *three;* but I knew he would be pleased when he saw the jelly and would be glad to think he waited; but, as you know, Poesie Plympton, that old stuff was all *squashy;* it didn't stiffen at *all* except at the bottom, where Joe said it was real nice and fine,—made him think of angel and church sociable cake; so you see *some* of it was good, but Joe said he guessed he wouldn't eat much, because I forgot to put the wine in, and he is rather fond of *that,* and he said he thought I could use it instead of glue in my scrap-books, so it wouldn't be lost; but then you know men *never* like house cooking, that is, men that take their meals down-town, so I didn't feel *hurt,* and, *besides,* Charlie Brood ate a *lot* of it that evening, and said it was *real* good.

Joe said it was too bad to make him do so, because he was so young, and there was only he and his sister left. Joe *thinks* he is so funny. Humph! Well, Joe was real nice, as I say, all

that day. I did up his foot for him just as the doctor said, and then tied a little ribbon round it to make it look pretty, because Joe let all the girls come up in his room to see me; and he let me read the paper to him, only he said I got a little mixed on the *editorials*, which I think is very *natural*, for I don't know nor care anything about the old war between England and Russia; why should I? And if the old presidential cabinet (such a silly name) should stand on their *heads* I shouldn't care, should you?

Men are all alike anyway, and *I* don't see what difference it makes *who* they appoint to do things, and "Civil Service" is so silly, *too*. I never could understand it, and I don't believe *half* the men know what they are talking about anyway. They just *quote* each other. So Joe let me read the casualties column and the funny things and skip the rest. Those are all I *ever* read anyway. So we got along nicely, and he said, when night came, the day had seemed real short, and I was a real nice nurse, and I was *so*

pleased, and I got up the next morning thinking how *nice* brothers were and how wicked Maud was to be so hateful; *but*, Poesie Plympton, it is one of the things about men you *never* can find them where you left them, and if I left Joe as mild as a May morning, as you might say, I found him like a Dakota blizzard.

He commenced with his breakfast by saying he wouldn't eat it, and wanted to know why in — Jerusalem, *we* will say, Poesie, dear — the cook couldn't be taught to cook like something, and he sent way down-town for some mutton cutlets with mushrooms, and they were the *nastiest*-looking things, and if *we* had cooked them Joe would have called them all *sorts* of names; and then he said the house smelled so of cooking it made him *sick*, and he said some one had carried off the morning paper, and after we hunted all round, and I'd sent the second girl out after one, he found he was *sitting* on it, and then every girl that entered the house afterwards he insisted upon it was

laughing at him about it, and he wouldn't let them come up to his room at *all*, for he said they were all "female blabs," and all the boys that came in he called "cheap dudes" and "ninny-hammers;" and ma and I couldn't speak out *loud* because it rasped him so, and if we *whispered* he said we were talking about him, and if we didn't speak at *all* he said the house was like a tomb; and he insisted on taking *double* the quantity of medicine the doctor left, so he could get out twice as *quick*, I suppose, and he got both the girls mad making remarks about them in a loud tone of voice, and he confused me so that I got the liniment all up on his toe; and I suppose of course I *did* hurt him, for he got *up* quick, and then sat *down* again so quick he tore my Arrasene tidy all to pieces; and then he said he'd like me a great deal better if I were out in the hall, and I just went and sat down by the window as *dejected*, till I saw one of Joe's friends going by, — a real old fuss, just like he is, — and I ran down

to the door and *begged* him to come in. And I run him right upstairs; and in five minutes you actually would have thought Joe was *purring*, he was so happy; and I just listened to see what *could* satisfy a man, and all I could hear was "New York Central," "Pacific Mail," "Margin," "Loan," "Per cent.," "Daisy," "Fine form," "Dry Monopole," and lots of other stuff; and I don't see as men talk any more sensible than girls, if that's the way they go on, do *you*, Poesie, dear?

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

X.

BOSTON, May, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I have been just *dying* to write you, but I *would* die before I'd have you think that I am such a ninny as not to know when you feel *superior* to your Peppermint and didn't want to *hear* from her; but Joe says I am very foolish to be so suspicious of my friends, that I am not *half* such a fool as I *look*, and so I determined, Poesie, dear, to give you the benefit of the doubt; and, *besides*, I think you will see the tone of my mind is improving, and that there is much more *to* me than there *was* when I was so giddy and paid no attention to the *serious* side of life.

The latest study that I have taken up is *Human Nature*. Clara said *she* was going

to study it, and I told her I guessed *I* would like to take it up a little with her. I wanted to ask her how she commenced to *study* the thing, but I did not *dare*, because you may talk about burning ploughshares and all the other awful things those old cast-iron martyrs had to bear, — they were nothing, *nothing* compared to the stare of a *Runover* girl; so I didn't say a word, but let Clara swim out first. She said she thought the best place for it was the *horse-cars;* that there were so many different *types* in those, but *I* couldn't see that they looked any different from people *out* of a horse-car, and I just wanted to ask Clara which one she was going to study up first, and what good it was going to do *anyway;* but she had told me before we started not to *talk*, and so I didn't open my mouth.

You mustn't think by my saying she told me not to talk and my *not* talking that she is domineering over me, for she *isn't*, only

the spirit that Runover girls always inspire you with is, "I-am-just-going-to-be-as-smart-as-you-are-and-the-devil-take-the-hindmost" kind of a spirit, and I never would have opened my mouth before *she* did if I'd seen a daddy-long-legs crawling down her neck. We got into the car about six o'clock, and it was *full* of gentlemen going home, and at *first* no one offered us a seat. Some of them read the newspapers, and some looked steadily out of the window, and some looked at us sort of on the defensive, as if they thought we were going to *ask* them to get up; and then there were some that looked sort of sarcastic, as much as to say, "We are the men who like those little sayings in the paper, that if women want more rights let them stand up and take them like men;" and one man, Poesie, dear, was mean enough to sit there and never *offer* his seat, and yet he wanted to *flirt* with us!

Joe says that that was a very common phase of human nature, but that we were unfortunate to have struck it so *soon*. He is very much interested in our progress, and makes me report to him every day. Pretty soon, however, some real stylish fellows in the forward part of the car caught sight of us and gave us their seats with a *great* flourish. They were the kind that give up their seat to you as if you were doing them a *favor*, and as if they wished they could do *more* for you, and are *so* gentlemanly and pleasant you just *hate to take* it. Some men, you know, get up kind of under protest, with a "Here-take-the-whole-car!" air, which makes you feel so *mean;* for you have to take it or else make a scene; but how you do pity that man's wife at home, though perhaps he is polite to *her*. Some men are awfully polite in public, but perfect *terrors* at home, so I don't know why it shouldn't be *vice versa sometimes*.

Well, as I said, these stylish young men, I think they were Harvard men, — you can most always tell *them*, you know, by their complacent, "no-question-about *us*" air, which is *lovely* if they are with *you*, but if they are with *another* girl it's *insufferable;* but these two belonged for the *moment*, as you *might* say, to Clara and I. I *couldn't* help admiring their clothes, I think they must have been made in *England;* you know *all* the swell fellows have their clothes made there now. Charlie Brood says it is so much *cheaper* is the reason, our tailors are so *exorbitant;* but Joe just made him count in the duties and everything, and then said he guessed he'd better say *lugs* instead of *cheapness.*

And then these fellows' hair was fixed so nice; but then I don't wonder, for they kept running their hands over their heads, though I have always *thought* that that was a fellow's excuse for showing a nice-shaped *hand* or his

ring to w hatever girl was behind him. But perhaps I was wrong in judging them so, and they only do it to keep their hair from growing the way that a *common* man's hair does. At any rate, they looked just *perfect*, and I do think it is *so* narrow-minded, don't *you*, Poesie, dear, to be always running people who like to *dress* well and pay considerable attention to it?

I know a lot of girls who belong to societies and things, and wear scant skirts that don't hang good, and big boots, and run their summer hats way into the winter, and *vice versa*, and when they have to go to the milliner's or dressmaker's pretend they don't *want* to, and don't care if their faces look greasy and their linen collars don't fit; and I think they are *horrid*, and I should think their folks would *thank* them to dress better, unless the whole *family* slozzles round the same, and then I suppose they don't notice.

Cora Shallow, you know, is very *philanthropic*, I think she calls it, and is forever

bringing up fellows at parties to introduce to me whose clothes don't fit, and who "carn't darnce *much;*" and Cora is *always* getting me one side, and whispering so loud and so *long* that it makes *me* feel mean, and the fellow, *too*, "Peppermint, dear, I have a young man here from so-and-so. I want you to be *especially* polite and attentive to him, because he is dressed so horribly. He is real *good*, and very smart, — far smarter than others of our friends who feel so much bigger; and I just wish you'd snub *them* for *him;* it would do them good," etc., etc., until I get as *mad*. Goodness me! I don't doubt their goodness. I don't expect their morals are loose just because their clothes and their joints are, and I'm always polite, I hope, to *any* gentleman; but I don't see why they are any better, just because their clothes *don't* fit, do *you*, Poesie, dear? But Cora seems to think that the worse they look, and the more they walk up your back when they are dancing, the *gooder* they

are. But if a fellow twirls his mustache at her! — you know they *will* do it, Poesie, dear, just as *sure* as they see a girl.

Why, I was looking at a man painting a steeple, the other day, way, *way* up in the air, so high and *dangerous*, you know, he had to have a rope round his waist, and I was just thinking how solemn and sick to his stomach he must feel up there, and *what* he would look like if he *should* get spilled, when, if you will *believe* it, that man saw me looking, and he let go of the only rope between him and his future home, and held on by his heels while he stroked his mustache. Of course he was very high up for me to *see* all this, but the motion is *unmistakable*. So you see what they *will* do; but Cora thinks if a fellow is at all guilty of those little failings he *can't* amount to anything, though he *thinks* he does; and she is all for what she calls "honest worth and true manhood" till I'm sick of the name, and always associate it with some one treading on my

corns and spilling coffee all over me; and I don't *see*, if a fellow is gentlemanly and honest, and supports himself, *why* he isn't just as nice if his clothes *do* fit him. Just as those young men's did in the car. Oh, they were *so* nice! And it was *so* nice to think I could look at them and study human nature at the same *time*.

Joe agrees with me that is lovely, but he says it was too *much* for a beginner to take a student first *time*, because he says their clothes are always more difficult to understand than a common *man's*. Clara said she hoped my brother didn't always class her with *me* in our experiences; she said she hardly *looked* at those fellows, which was the *biggest* — for, six weeks afterwards, we were looking at Susie Green's crazy quilt, and Clara picked out a piece that she said was just like the lining to one of the fellow's *overcoat* sleeves. But that is just *like* a Runover girl. Good-by, Poesie, dear.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

XI.

BOSTON, June, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I don't know why I should have *imagined* that ma *belonged* to the house the same as the front door or the skylight; but I should have been just as much surprised if *they* had up and told me *they* were going on a little visit to New York as to have *ma* tell me so. I *must* say I think it was a little *unfeeling* of her, but Joe says he supposes she got tired of being worked for all she is worth, and thought she'd try a little "See-how-it-is-yourself" business. But I was real kind of *stunned* at first, and I suppose I felt mad to think I *was* scared. That is the way *men* always act, you know, when they are scared; they don't want you to *know* it, so they get *mad*. Joe didn't seem to get mad *this* time, but

he was so confused he went and hung his overcoat carefully up on ma's best bonnet, and left his cane out in the vestibule, and when Joe leaves that old cane (I've forgotten just what it *is*, but somebody or other planted it, or stood under it, or cut it down, or something) round so easy *something* is going on in his mind; but he had presence of mind enough to be real polite and pleasant to ma, but I *hadn't*, and I acted, Joe says, like a hen with her head off; but *then* I commenced to be pleased with the idea, for I have often made suggestions to ma about the housekeeping which she never took any *notice* of, and as she said now I was to have the entire *management* myself, I immediately saw opportunities which I could make *considerable* of.

So when she finally started off Sunday night *she* felt more worried than *I* did. Joe said she probably "dipped into the future," like the fellow in Locksley Hall, and saw "all the wonder that would be;" he is *always* quoting

something silly. Well, I thought I might as well commence right off, so when I got back from the depot I told the girls they couldn't *either* of them have the evening out. I read in *Harper's* that in *France* people are not at all particular about days out for their servants, — they can take it when they can get it *conveniently*, — and I think it is *much* nicer, for we are always being hurried up for something, because it is either the cook's or the second girl's time out, and if *I* kept house *I* wouldn't have it, — at least that is what I *thought* when I commenced. The girls didn't say anything, but they looked sort of blank at each other; but I soon heard them laughing in the kitchen, so I knew they didn't care, and I thought how foolish ma had always been to let them go on so long having their own way. I asked Joe if he didn't think it was nicer to have Mary in than it was to have *cook* wait on table at tea, and he said it certainly *was;* but he said what was fun

to cook and *I* might be death to Mary, — men are such scarecrows! — but I noticed he seemed pleased to think it *could* be arranged so, and so I determined to make *another* change that I have always wanted ma to, which I knew he would like *too*.

Don't you remember that horrid Bartley, in "Modern Instance," said the cook's imagination always seemed to fail her Monday mornings? — and that is just the way *Anna's* does. So *I* just told her what we would have for breakfast the next morning, and it was *lovely*, and Joe looked so surprised and ate so much I felt quite set up. I found out about twelve o'clock, though, that there hadn't been any washing done; and when I asked Anna, she said I couldn't have expected her to do it, with all that hard breakfast to get. So I told her to do it in the afternoon; but she said the clothes couldn't be left out all night, and, besides, where was the company to dinner I had told her about, and how did

I expect she could get up a big dinner and wash too? It was hard enough, anyway, to have a big dinner on a Monday if the washing *had* been done; and if the washing had to be done the next day, that would bring the ironing Wednesday, and I had told her I was going to have some girls to lunch Wednesday, and what did I expect to do *anyway?*

She talked so *fast*, Poesie, dear, that I just had to stand there and open my mouth in little gasps, for I couldn't get a word in, and finally she went down cellar and shut the door so sort of *firmly* I thought I wouldn't say anything to her. Besides, all she said was sort of *true*, and I didn't just know what *to* say; and just then Charlie Brood and his sister came to take me driving, and I was so busy I forgot all about it. We had a *lovely* drive out to Milton; but don't you think, Poesie, dear, as we were coming back through the Highlands, just as we got to that lovely cream-cake place, I saw a girl coming out of it with a parasol that looked *some-*

thing like a *summer squash*, and it just reminded me that I hadn't ordered a *thing* for the dinner, or told Anna one *thing* about it; and every one was invited, and we always had to have it at six to suit Joe. I felt so *dreadfully* just as I thought of it that I grew sick to my stomach, and I wouldn't let Charlie stop to buy me any cream-cakes, and I don't believe I *ever* want to see the place again, it has such *painful* associations.

Charlie Brood thought I was mad at something, and I *couldn't* explain, because his sister is one of those young women who always engages her dress-maker two or three years ahead, and her summer boarding-place on Fast day, and has soap and things always drying a year or so ahead, and has engaged just so many cucumbers of just the same man, to be delivered just the same time for ever so many years. I shouldn't be surprised if she had each cucumber stamped with her monogram, — she is always *marking* everything. And how she

ever *dares*, — she may be dead forty times before pickling time comes. Well, I couldn't let *her* see how careless I was, and so Charlie thought I was awful queer; and the dinner was got ready in such a hurry it wasn't good, and I was so mixed up I wasn't at *all* polite, and I had to hurry Mary so she broke the best salad-bowl and the Canton fruit-dish; and I told her she'd better *leave* if she was so careless; and Anna heard of it, and said she guessed she'd go, too, for she'd be lonesome without Mary.

So I told them they could *both* go right off in the morning. I could get some girls that wouldn't get so confused over a little company. And then Anna commenced to cry, and say if my mother had been there it wouldn't have been so; but I was very *firm*, for I had thought for a long time that Mary wasn't half as stylish as she might be, and Susie Green had told me of the *loveliest* second girl that some one she knew had had. She was just *perfect* about her manners in waiting

upon table, and Susie said she would show any one into the house in a manner that was perfectly *heavenly;* and you can imagine I was *very* anxious to secure her.

Joe seemed to be *more* anxious about the *cook;* he said he hardly saw the advantage of a girl's style in passing things at the table if there was nothing to *pass;* but I told him there were plenty of cooks to be had, he needn't worry, and I went to a *very* stylish intelligence office, where they are *very* particular: they keep opening the windows for fear the odor will be unpleasant for you, and they keep the servants way off so you won't be troubled by them, and they are *so* sympathetic and seem to know *just* what you want. They recommended to me an old woman, who was perfectly *dreadful*-looking, but they said she was a very *worthy* woman, and I knew of course that they must be right, for they were so *particular* about everything.

I had heard *ma* say to be always sure

about references, and this woman couldn't *give* me any; but I felt so polite and favored I didn't dare to be *positive*. So I took her, or at least I told her she could come after she'd got her clothes, which she said were down on some horrid old street. I have heard people talk about *engaging* girls and their not *coming*, and I was sort of in *hopes she* would do it, though I oughtn't to have expected she would tell such a *big* one coming from such a nice office. She *didn't* come till the next morning; said she *misunderstood* me about coming the night before. I don't see how she *could*, but of course she *did*. I told her she could commence to work right off. I didn't exactly know on *what*, but I guessed she'd better wash the steps, they were *very* dirty. She said she *never* did that; the "sicond gurl" had always done it for her.

So I called Joe into the parlor and shut the door, and asked him if he thought I'd

better ask *her* to do it. He said he thought I'd better not, for she must be *very* tired. He'd seen her dust the paper weight in the library seven times that morning; and then her stockings looked so nifty he was afraid the water might spot them. I knew he meant to be *sarcastic*, but I just told him to wait till *dinner time* and *see* if he didn't like her; but I was real sorry I *said* so, for when he came home to dinner the police had taken the *cook* off for getting into a fight with the grease-man, and the *second girl* had left because we didn't have an annunciator, and she had to run upstairs if she wanted to *ask* about anything. But Joe was real good; he took me down to Vercelli's to dinner and to see "Peck's Bad Boy." So it was all right, only — but I'll tell you the rest later.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XII.

BOSTON, July, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

It seems such a *long* time since I wrote you last, but you see I was for a while almost *prostrated* with my house-keeping, and I told Joe I positively *believed* that I'd have to go out to the Adams Nervine Asylum; but Joe said he didn't think I'd better, he'd take me to some of the "Pops," — they were *very* soothing; and he did, and they helped me *ever* so much. I don't think they are exactly *soothing;* in fact, at times you feel as if the man that plays those brass things that look like blazer-covers had your head between them; but some of the pieces are just *heavenly*, and make you feel as if you were out on the water in the moonlight, all *alone*, — that is, I mean, not all *alone*, but just *out* there, enjoying the *evening*, and all

that, — and I asked Joe if he didn't feel so, and he said he *did*, but he had thought it was the draft from the side door until I told him. Joe seems *dreadfully* unromantic, but he has *some* sentimental associations, for he said some of the music reminded him of the Oakland Garden band-car. Joe *seems* very coarse, but he *means* right.

I was going to tell you about my *house-keeping career;* but speaking of being out on the water reminds me of "The Danube River," which the Glee Club sang class-day evening, out at Harvard, and I want to *tell* you, Poesie, dear, that never *again* as long as I *live* do I want to go to class-day with one of the *graduates*. Give me *anything*, even a *junior*, and I can have a good time; but I must say that there is too much of "the rose-that-all-are-praising" business about a graduate to make you feel real *happy* with him. You see, Dick Hascot graduated this year, and he invited *me* in *particular*. Maud Tuff *advised* me not to go

with him, and Susie Green was kind enough to say that he only asked me because that Hoof-slinger girl from Philadelphia couldn't come; but Maud only meant that I wouldn't *enjoy* myself much with him, he would have so little time. And Susie Green, — well, we know, Poesie, dear, how much *she* is on advice. So I said I'd *go*, and I just wish Susie Green could have seen how pleased he was *when* I said so.

Don't you hate to have fellows begin to be *quite* so pleased over you? It kind of *frightens* you, like the first thunder-shower of the season, when you think of all you've got to stand during the *summer*. Of course the very first *thing* I thought of class-day morning when I woke up was my *crimps*. It was a very funny coincidence, but Dick says the first thing he thought of was his *shoes*. He had a pair that were too *tight*, and he said he dreaded those *shoes* more than anything *else* for the day. Ma said *she* thought what an awful time *she* was going to have all day. She doesn't like

chaperoning, and says she'd as soon be a toy poodle with a string tied to her collar, —*sooner*, for *they* can go to sleep, or snap at people if they don't *like* them; but she has to be very vigilant, and act like a polite ferret, and feeling all the time as if the boys wished her in *Sheol*. *Ma* didn't say "Sheol," but I know what she *means*.

So you see we all were very *thoughtful*, as people always *should* be on such an eventful day, and ma and I silently laced, and buttoned, and pinned back, and tied on, and flattened down, and pulled out, and Joe kept saying that after we got *dressed* he should like his fishing-clothes got out of the camphor trunk, and that our skirts came below our dresses, and he didn't see how women dared to trust machine-stitching. Of course he only meant to be *funny;* but when you feel real *serious* and *perplexed* the least *thing* will make you go off at a tangent. Of course I had my usual struggle with my *hair*, — it was *not* a *success;* but Joe said

if I wouldn't think about it, and keep poking at it with my finger and a hair-pin, it wouldn't look any worse than any other girl's. Of course he had the usual manly remarks to make about the girls that comb their hair *off* their foreheads, as if we could *all* do so, and as if they would like us any better if we *did*.

There was that man Maud Tuff was engaged to once. She said he always wanted her to roll her hair back *smooth*, and wear low, broad *heels*, and read George Macdonald's and E. P. Roe's novels, and be "sweet and yielding" always. But she said she noticed he had an eye to the girls that *wore* bangs and crimps and high heels, and could see his literature and go him some better on "Ouida," and Zola, and W. H. Mallock. Humph! Not but that she *wanted* to be womanly, and she doesn't take to unwholesome reading; but she said she'd as soon have a man's advice as a monkey's for *consistency*. Well, *where was* I? Oh, yes! Dick came tearing along at the last minute

after us. I had told him he'd better let us *meet* him out *there*, but he wanted to be so *deathly* polite! He came up the steps like a maniac, with his face just the color of my corsage bouquet, and his old *boots* on. He asked ma and I if he might change them in the carriage just before we got *out*. Of course we said he *could*, but you ought to have seen Joe laugh to the cuspadore while he pretended to knock the ashes off his cigar. And he just stood in the door to see us off, with his linen suit on, looking as *cool* as a head of lettuce, and said he was going down the *harbor*.

We got out there finally, though I never knew a carriage to bump around so; but perhaps it was because it disturbed my crimps, and Dick's corns, and ma's dignity, that we *noticed* it. Dick changed his boots going up Harvard street, and *his* torture began. He just had time to run us into the exercises and leave us, and that is the way it was all day; he'd pounce on us a minute and then leave us, and

all we had a chance to say was, "How are your crimps?" — "Dreadful nasty, thank you. How are your shoes?" — "Hurt like blazes, thank you." Over in his rooms, at the spread, we *did* think we'd have a little time to ourselves. He had bowed himself round steady for an hour or so, till he looked as if he was sawing wood, and had smiled and said sweet things indiscriminately to each and every young and old girl there was there, and at the same time had tried to make it pleasant for me by finding nice fellows to run me round to the other spreads I was invited to, and tried to keep his mother posted on which ones she must be polite to, and get down and let them step on her, or get the moon for them; and which ones she could let alone, and they'd scrimmage round for themselves, and not expect to be sat right down *on* the table, with a waiter for each ear.

As I say, he'd done all that, and promised every girl he'd throw some of the tree flowers

at her, and I had just found a nice window-seat, and his shoes were beginning to ease up a little, and we'd just got one spoonful of sherbet apiece in our mouths (the salad looked like poggy-bait or some such horrid thing by that time), when *six* sweet young things rushed up and demanded that Dick should find their carriage, — they didn't feel like asking *anybody* to get it for them but "*Mr. Hascot*," and they *must* get home before five. I could have chewed them all up with a relish; but I suppose they'd have all gone down my back like the crust of a biscuit does sometimes, and distressed me. "Mr. Hascot" *went*, and *found* their old carriage, and by that time he had to go off and get on his old clothes for the free-row, and I didn't see him *again* hardly, for in the evening we kept meeting people who wanted to congratulate him, and fellows who wanted to say good-by; and he'd have to keep leaving me "a moment" to dash off somewhere, and just

as I'd get reconciled to some other young man he'd dash back and carry me off.

So I really didn't have any *sentiment* at all during the day. Twice he commenced to say something *very* nice; but the first time one of the sparks from those old set pieces on Holworthy came into the window and went into his eye; and the second time we were listening to the Glee Club sing "The Danube River," and it was perfectly lovely, and everything was just right and *appropriate*, when some horrid little man stepped right on Dick's toe, and his wife stuck her feathers right into my crimps; and we never said a *word*, but got ma and the carriage, and came *home*.

Joe says he doesn't see the *advantage* of having a best girl class-day, either for their company or to show off. He says if they *must* have them, though, they ought to be labelled "This is Smith's Girl;" or "This Girl did not Come with any one in Particular, and

would like to be taken Round." He says it reminds him of the nigger picnic where they all go round saying, "Who brought Eliza?" But Joe never *did* have any sentiment, although Clara Smart *is* always looking for it in him. Clara didn't go to class-day; if she had she'd have got some junior who thought he knew something, and have sat in dark corners with him, "appealing to his intellectual side." Intellectual fiddlesticks! Just as if they *had* any intellectual side. But you know Runover girls are *always* after the "unattainable."

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

XIII.

BOSTON, July, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Ma says if it hadn't been for Clara Smart I never could have been *induced* to stay all summer in Boston. But Clara is getting so *severe* that she sort of *impresses* me, and when she began to shy last May at all my suggestions about tennis clothes and shade hats and parasols, and said she was very tired of this annual preparation for a *foolish*, *heedless* summer, I began to feel sort of *small* and *mean*. And then she quoted all those chestnutty arguments about people having so much poorer accommodations at the summer places than at home, and how *cool* and *comfortable* Boston is in summer, and how much better vegetables and fruit we can have here than *away*, and what beautiful spots there

are just *about* Boston if people would only discover them for themselves, and *appreciate* them, and how the trips down the harbor were as good as ocean voyages, and all *that;* and then she *finally* announced that *she* should not go away *anywhere;* that she should do a great deal of *reading*, and take short trips off. She said this going about and seeing the same things and the same people, and doing the same old round of amusements, was disgusting and degrading to our higher natures; that we ought not to give up all individuality, and play at "follow-my-leader" year *in* and year *out.* And it sounded so sort of grand and *big*, and she impressed me so much, as I say, while she *said* it, that I went right by Huyler's without *thinking* of an ice-cream soda; and you may *know*, Poesie, dear, by *that* that I *must* have been impressed.

Of course when I thought it all *over* I didn't see *why* it wasn't nice to see the same

people and do the same things if one *enjoyed* them; and I'd a great deal rather give up my *individuality* any time than a good *time*, though perhaps I don't quite comprehend what Clara *meant;* but I know all these girls that are spoken of as having a great deal of *character* and high natures never seem to have a very good *time*, and I always think that if *I* were *they* I should want to come down occasionally and be kind of *common* or *something*. Joe says what I mean is, I should think they would want to *swear* a little occasionally; but of course I don't suppose they'd want to do *that*. But I mean to sit round kind of easy and let things *go*, and not always be hunting up some *purpose*, and analyzing their *feelings* and *motives* all the time. It must be *dreadfully* wearing. But I suppose they get in the way of falling in with some one else, just as *I* did with *Clara*. Ma and Joe said they could stay in the city if I could; *they* didn't care; but ma

said, of course I must think of the servants, and let *them* have a little rest, and have light meals; and I said of course I would; they could take lots of days off for all of me, for Clara said she was going to eat a great deal of *fruit* all summer.

She said it was lovely to go down to the market and buy what you wanted. She said it was very *interesting*. So I thought I would eat mostly fruit; and we *all* could; and we planned one day at Nantasket, and one day at Nahant, and one day to go out a few miles at *random* on some railroad, and one day we were going to walk about Boston and *see* the things the papers say we don't half appreciate, and one day we were going on the Common and Public Garden, — all *over* them, — for *really* and *truly*, Poesie, dear, I *never* went all *over* the Common, did you? And I never sailed on the pond, or sat in that nice little arbor, or examined the fountains and statues. And that was *another* thing

we were going to do, — examine all the *statues;* and we were going to read that article on them of what's his name's, and see if he was *right*, — I mean, of course, see if we *agreed* with him.

Of course I don't *expect* that Clara and I would *know* more about it than he would; but I meant we wanted to *appreciate* it. And we were going to read all about Bunker Hill, and then go over *there*. And all this time we were going to read a *great* many books from the Public Library. Joe said he thought that was a *very* nice plan, because, he said, if we went there to get a book it would necessitate our staying there nearly all *day*, and it was real *cool* there always, and *calming*, because no one ever seemed to be in a *hurry;* and, besides, it was a good place for us to pursue our studies of *Human Nature*. Joe is *real* good at suggestions if you only know when he isn't trying to be *funny*. So you see we had a *very* interesting *programme* laid

out, and we didn't know just which we had better *commence* on. Of course we were very much in *earnest*, and when Maud Tuff and Susie Green called to say good-by, I pitied them for being so silly as to think they must go away because every one *else* did; and I felt so superior to them that Susie got to snickering behind my back, and Maud vowed she wouldn't *kiss* me, I looked too much like *Clara Smart.*

We commenced one *Monday*. We had *intended* to commence with the statues, but it was *very* hot and dusty, and I couldn't help thinking when I got up in the morning how nice *Maud* must be feeling at the beach, and Susie Green at Mount Desert, and I told Clara I guessed we had better go to Nantasket *that* day, and she said she thought perhaps a sea-breeze *would* be invigorating; and it was perfectly *lovely*, only I didn't really *enjoy* it, for I kept thinking we had got to come back at night, and it looked so perfectly

jolly down there. Clara and I saw all the girls riding down to the landing from the cottages and hotels, looking so *comfortable* and *satisfied*, and we wondered if they didn't feel flat doing it every *year;* but they did not *seem* to, *I* thought, only I didn't say so to Clara.

We didn't go to a *hotel* for our dinner, for we thought it might look sort of queer, — at least, *Clara* said so. I don't believe *I* should have thought of it, and I would really have liked it, for I was *awfully* hungry, and the hotels smelled *so* good, for Clara wanted to walk by them all, for she said we ought to be *independent;* but I didn't see any independence in walking by a dining-room window when you were half starved and only looking *in;* and, you see, ma thought she would help us carry out our idea, and all she gave us in our lunch-baskets was two sandwiches apiece, and the rest was *fruit;* but I wouldn't give way before Clara; so we

found a *rock*, — we had to have a *rock*, you see, because we were at the *beach*, and it was *proper*, — but it was *awful* hot, and my crimps all came out, and I had worn lisle-thread gloves, because Clara said we wanted to look sort of *dowdy*, and people wouldn't *notice* us so much, and they always make me all over goose-flesh; and we got all greasy, and stained with the fruit, and we made a mistake about the steamer, and had to run finally, and when we got to that stretch of sand between Atlantic Hill and the landing I got *my* shoes full of sand, and I had to sit flat down on the road, and take them off and *empty* them, and while I sat there I just told Clara that she needn't expect me to go on any more *excursions* with her. I'd go and see her old statues and monuments with her, but as for taking two or three hours' *work* to get half an hour's pleasure I wouldn't do it; and before we got home it was *thundering*, and ma said

she thought we would enjoy ourselves so at the beach that we wouldn't want much supper, and she had let the girls and the fire go out, for she said that was *always* part of the stay-at-homes' programme, and the street looked so *lonesome* after all the folks at the beach.

The next *morning*, however, it was an east *wind* and rainy, and Clara came over to crow a little over the folks at the sea-shore; but while she was crowing Maud came in. She'd come up to do some shopping, and she said she had left every one having a frabgeous time, playing cards and singing, and although I tried to look as firm and indifferent as Clara did, I couldn't, and when the sun came out and Clara wanted me to go out on the Common, I said, "Clara *Smart*, do you think I'm going wandering round that wet Common to try and find a little individuality? I don't doubt there are *lovely* views on it, but I can see them *all* the rest of the

year, and I'd like a little *different* view for a few *weeks*, and I don't care if my room is so small I fall out of the window, and I have to eat hard-tack and *baked beans*. I'd rather go and live on Nixie's mate than not go away all summer;" and Clara just re-adjusted her glasses, and told me I forgot myself, and then walked off, and I saw her meandering round the Common for *two hours* with Drake's "Landmarks" and King's "Handbook of Boston," and *I* nearly had hysterics; but I wrote Maud Tuff that Joe would be *right* down the next day to engage board for us at the same place she was in. Wasn't Clara *horrid?*

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XIV.

FLASHPORT, July, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Don't you dislike people who never get *enthusiastic* over anything? — it is so sort of squelching and depressing, and makes you feel as *meachin*. When I went round to buy a few *last things*, you know, like Jamaica ginger and mustard plasters, I told Joe the clerk spoiled half my anticipation; he did up the things with his long, white fingers, and pushed them towards me, whisked my money into the till, and then walked off, hissing "See-saw" through his teeth, as if he didn't care a *rap* whether I was going to the beach or to Gehenna. Joe said probably the innocent young man did not *know* I was going away; but of course he did. What did he *think* I wanted of Jamaica

ginger and mustard plasters if I wasn't going *away?* But Joe says if he had to get enthusiastic over every one that bought them he'd get all broke up. He says, if I want to see true enthusiasm, watch the men who lift the baggage; he says *they* throw their whole soul, and body, too, into it. Of course he meant to be sarcastic, for he is one of the kind that always wants to *lynch* the baggage-men, because he had a fishing-rod broken once coming up from Maine.

You'd have *thought* he was going to paralyze the whole Boston & Maine Railroad, but he *didn't;* he only paralyzed ma and me, and we *never* hear the word *fishing-rod* but it makes us feel *tired*. *I* don't blame them a bit. I think, after I'd lifted *one* such trunk as Susie Green carries, I'd take the rest to fire up the engine; and, as for *Joe Perkins's* trunks, if you had helped *sit* on them, as I have, to press the lid down, and got your fingers nipped in the strap, you'd

realize how much there was in them; and I don't blame car-drivers and conductors for getting mad.

You see, since Clara and I studied *human nature*, I have thought a *great deal* about such things, and I've come to the conclusion that if *I* were a driver I'd whip up the horses, and I wouldn't stop till I got from the Eastern depot to Grove Hall, or *vice versa*, and just *see* how people could *help* themselves. Why, I should think they'd get so *tired* of hearing that bell-twanging right behind their ears all the time that they'd up and do dreadful things, — fight the passengers, kill the conductors, and run into everything. *I* wouldn't look down side streets or up door-steps if I were they; there are enough that get right under the horses' noses, and they *have* to stop then. I always make it a point to signal them from the curb-stone *decisively* with my *parasol* or my *muff*, because then, if there is any one on the car

I don't want to ride with, I can just turn round and walk off, and pretend it is the wrong car. I did that one day, though, and the old driver swore at me. I think it was *horrid* of him when I have such charitable feelings for them, don't you?

I am awfully in sympathy with the conductors, too. Just think how they have to collect fares, and make change, and hang on to the car, and help old ladies and children on and off, and pull the old register, all at the same time; and I think they are real good and patient, for I hardly *ever* go downtown but I start to get out at the wrong place, and have to start the car up again, and the day we packed, I guess we got into a dozen different ones and had to get right out again because I forgot things and had to go back.

It was real nice and exciting — packing. I do *love* that part of going away. Ma would get a trunk all packed, and every-

thing dovetailed, as it were, as *nice*, and then I'd remember something that ought to have gone in before, and she would have to take them all out again, and some things we couldn't get in, and I just sat and laughed at ma; her hair-net just waved about wildly, and her collar got twisted till the stud was way round under her left ear, and she burst the seams of her new satine, and it was *such* fun! Of course it *wasn't* much fun for her, as she said; but mothers always *have* a rough time of it, and it's no use their trying to slip *out* of it. I told her, never mind, she'd have a good rest after she got there; but she said she didn't see much rest in sitting round on piazzas and bluffs and damp lawns, being scared to death for fear I'd got drowned or spoiled my dresses, and when she isn't worrying for fear I have been drowned she's *wishing* I had been, I act so. I told her that was very wicked and discouraging when I had laid out such plans for a superior summer.

I am going to read Emerson's works, and bead me a Jersey. Joe says he has got all his money up on the *Jersey;* but I tell him he is dreadfully silly to be so sarcastic when I have *proved* how *very* much in earnest I am over my self-improvement, — don't you think so, Poesie, dear?

I bought me a lovely shade hat at Stearns's. I didn't *intend* to buy it there, because I didn't approve at all of his putting Japanese fans in the windows of the old court-house, just because he is going to occupy it; it seemed very sacrilegious to me, just the same as it does putting blue spectacles and liver pads on Auguste's bust. You know, since I have been with Clara I have grown very *intense.*

I don't think it is proper at *all* to turn Hollis-street church into a theatre, and if Dixey plays "Adonis" anywhere *else*, I shall *never* go into the place on *principle.*

But I was talking about going away, wasn't

I? After we got all ready Joe took us down to Parker's for a real good, *square*, *quiet* dinner to *start* on, and ma said she would let Joe and I have buckwheats *every* morning next winter if we would let her stay there all summer, it was so cool and comfortable and nice; but I got her off just as quick as I *could*, for I saw she had got the first symptoms of the "stay-at-home fever," and I *trembled*. Joe was as anxious to get away as I; to be sure, he comes up every day, and hardly ever stays down, and when he *does* ma and I are nearly wild; but he is one of those men that like to go into the city in the morning fanning himself with his hat and say, "Whew! you're pretty hot up *here*. *I* slept under the blankets all night." Of course he thinks it's funny to say so, but I heard Maud Tuff's brother tell him that he'd *get* knocked into a hotter place still if he worked it much more.

Joe isn't real *easy* to travel with; he *intends*

to be nice, I suppose, but he insists on buying everything that comes along, like books and papers and fruit, and then he swears to think you've got so many bundles, and then he wanders off with the tickets because he says women can't take care of them, and he keeps them, and when you look at all your bundles and haven't any ticket and don't know where he *is*, it takes a *great* deal of self-possession not to get dreadfully *hot* and *worked up*. Of course I never knew him to fail to get us off all right at the last *moment*, but you never seem to be sure that he *will* do so.

I like to watch people when I'm travelling, because I think it helps me in my human nature. I like to watch people's travelling-bags, some of them are so stylish, and I know then that the girls come from Baltimore or New York; but I know a *Boston* travelling-bag just as far off as I can see it, and I know *one* thing, Poesie, dear, if I should meet even

you, and you'd just got home from *Venice* and I hadn't seen you at *all*, and I was *dying* to see you, I wouldn't *speak* to you if you carried one of those flat black bags, with a show-off handkerchief plastered into the front pocket. I feel, sometimes, as if I'd like to "run a muck" like the Indians do and kill every woman or girl that has one in her hand.

I never got a chance to *ask* any one or find *out*, but I am just crazy to know if the handkerchiefs are really *glued* in there, for I *never* saw any one use one. I *suppose* they are given to them just so, and some women are so conscientious they never alter a present. I do, I always go and find out just how much a present costs, and then, if I want to, I exchange it; for shouldn't you feel bad to think you had burdened a person for life with some awful thing they didn't want and had got to lay away in an under drawer or an upper shelf, so they could keep it *politely*, but never make any use for it?

I declare, I was going to tell you all about Flashport, and I haven't told you a *thing;* but don't forget that I am *here*, and you must direct all your letters to me to the Crash House, Flashport; and *do* direct them plainly, because it is *so* gratifying to have letters with a foreign postmark laying round under other people's noses; and there is another girl named Perkins here, and I believe it would be just *like* her to freeze on to them, because she speaks so sweetly and softly and never gets her dresses mussed up.

Don't forget it.

Yours,

PEPPERMINT.

XV.

FLASHPORT, August, 1865.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

If you were *I*, *would* you or would you *not* get tanned all up? I am in a perfect state of *doubt* as to whether I'd better or *not*. Now, some people say how nice and healthy and sensible a girl looks with *real brown* hands and face, and how they like to *see* it; and then some one will say what lovely white hands and face some *other* girl has got, and how they do like to see them, they look so inviting, and they don't see any need of people scorching themselves all *up* just to show they have been away for the summer; they think there is no *beauty* in it, and it seems silly to try to do it. Now, *both* remarks seem all *right*, and I really don't know what to *do*. Joe says I needn't have my mind torn so by

conflicting emotions, for I never do *anything* but freckle and burn *anyway*, and so neither of those remarks would apply to *me*. But he didn't feel comfortable when he said it, because he had run for the steamer, and missed it, — you see he thought he could run as well as Sam Snapp, — anyway he was ashamed to say he *couldn't* right before a whole *piazza*-full. But he ought to have *known* better, because Mr. Snapp (all the girls call him Sam, but *I* think it sounds dreadfully familiar, so I am going to say *Mr.* Snapp) has such *lively* legs, and Joe is so stout.

Why, Sam makes me think of an electric monkey. You know he is one of those fellows that you always find at a hotel, and I think they must go with it, the same as the water-cooler and the fire-extinguisher. Really, I don't suppose he *does*, but it seems as if the landlord *ought* to give him his board and something besides, for he must keep lots of

whole families here, because he is so attentive to the *girls;* and you know nowadays where there are a lot of girls in one family they are naturally glad of some man who is ready to order their horse, or get their mail for them, or do an occasional errand up in the city, and introduce them to all the new young men, because in the natural order of things they *couldn't* have one *apiece*, and it is refreshing to them to have the *seventh* or *eighth* of a one, and they will make their fathers stay in any *sort* of a place, or at any expense, if they can just keep it up.

Sam is always ready to pick up spools of cotton when they go rolling off, and off, and off, and your lap is so full you'd about *cry* if you had to get up. And you'd just as liefs he'd run up to your room and find *anything* for you; and when he goes up to the city he always brings down lots of candy and funny papers; and if he sees a spider or an ant on a lady he'll run way across the

room to get it off before she hollers; and he'll help you in and out of hammocks so comfortably and *satisfactorily*, without making you feel as if you wish the hammock had been *sunk* before you ever tried to have anything to do with it. And so you *see* how valuable he is, and how unwise it would be for a landlord to let such a young man go away.

Why, the Rev. Mr. Luther and Mr. Van Faust and Signora Frean Esy are not *half* so popular as Sam. They are all at the hotel, but I don't think they are thought *half* as much of as *Sam Snapp*. When the barge comes that he is in, even the old ladies rush for it, and they don't take any *notice* of the *others*. Of course when Cecilia Rosamond *Brown* comes everybody looks. She is the *other* one that balances the house with Sam, and keeps all the young *men* here. She is *very* stylish and handsome, and, although of course she couldn't possibly marry more

than *one* young man, I think they are *all* kind of in *hopes* she may look on them with a favorable eye, and they just keep hanging round, and *that*, of course, is a good thing for the house. They don't *eat* much, you know, in such a state of excitement, and they generally smoke a good deal and throw their cigars away. Joe *groans* so over it, he says that girl ought to be kept on two hair-pins for a year for causing so much ruin; but he don't mean ruin of the *young men*, you know, but of *cigars*.

Everywhere you go, on edges of chairs and window-sills, and piazza-rails and billiard-tables, you see cigars that have been only a little *bit* smoked, and Joe says it is dreadful; he says the proprietor ought to have them ground up and used for English breakfast tea; he says people would never know the *difference*, and he hates to see so much waste. Every one admires Miss Brown, of course; she is so *very*, very much superior in looks

and style to all us *common* girls, that it would be all nonsense to be *jealous* of her, so we just watch for her coming as we do the *steamer* and the GAZETTE, and pretend we just *dote* on her.

I don't, Poesie, dear; I don't know about the *other* girls, for I suppose we are all so afraid of giving ourselves away that we just keep *up* that murmur of admiration all the *time;* but I'd just like to trip her *up* when she sails about so, like sort of an eternal squelcher on *other* girls' aspirations. *She* never has any stray hairs in her neck, or her bang never gets refractory; but if it *did* it would look all *right.* The toes of her shoes never get worn, or her heels turned over, and her skirts all hang straight, and she pays *just* as much attention to the *back* of her costumes as she does to the *front.* Joe says *she* is no girl that's an angel to meet, but a devil to follow (that is one of his old favorites); he says you can walk all round her, the same

"CECILIA R. BROWN."—p. 140.

as you are invited to inspect all the articles in those "up one flight, don't ring" places, and you can't detect *any* imposition.

What impresses Joe the *most* are her stockings. I suppose I *ought* to say *hosiery;* but it is *such* a relief to talk right *off* to *you*, Poesie, dear, and not stop to be elegant. Well, Joe says he'd like to know where her backyard is, so he could see them all together on the *clothes-line;* horrid, isn't he? But he says he thinks that would be more *polite* than to examine them when she *wears* them. Isn't he a goose not to know that that is just what she wears them *for?* — but he says no lady would do that.

Joe, with all his friskiness, has *very* old-fashioned notions about some things. But I think Cecilia R. Brown is a lady in spite of her fancy hosiery. I think it is the *meanest* thing to say things about persons just because they dress kind of crafty and are beautiful, and she is perfectly *lovely*, and that is *just*

the reason why I want to trip her up. Now, that *Perkins* girl I told you about that I was afraid would get my *letters* isn't a *bit* pretty, but you'd think she was Maud Granger or Mrs. Langtry posing for a photograph, the way she acts on the piazzas and in the parlor. She sings alto and calls all the gentlemen "Sir." "Yes, sir," and "No, sir," she says, as if she was *such* a young thing; and she's got dimples which she works for all they are *worth*, and she is so soft and sweet Joe says she ought to be wrapped in a caramel paper. She likes to get out on the rocks with a white dress on and sing songs, and she *pretends* she likes to read little simple novels and poetry; but I saw her with a *tearing* old story one day, and she was so absorbed in it she never even *winked* for twenty minutes. She pretends, too, that she doesn't care for gentlemen; she only cares for her "*Par;*" but I noticed, the other day, when there were four bicycle terrors came

into the dining-room, she nearly had hysterics, she was so tickled.

Of course I don't blame her for being *pleased*. I must confess *I* was so gratified I swallowed my ice-cream so quick it all went into my forehead, but I didn't *show* it. I kept my eyes right on the salt-shaker, and, although I kicked Maud Tuff so hard under the table that she couldn't play tennis for two *days*, you never would have *suspected* that I cared any more for those fellows than for four *potato-bugs*.

Joe says I mustn't find fault with her "innocent, childlike nature." He says she's *got* one, because he heard her mother say so; but *I* never saw a girl with an *innocent, childlike nature*, — if that's what you call it, — that wouldn't stay out on the rocks later than any *other* girl, and go off on rackets that other girls wouldn't *think* of going on; but I suppose it is all *right*, only it seems kind of *mean*. But I declare I was going to tell you

about the *natural beauties* of Flashport, for I never like to talk about *people* — do *you*, Poesie, dear? — when there are such beautiful things like rocks, and trees, and ocean, and things, to talk about; but I just wanted you to know about that *Perkins* girl, because *some one some time might* get her confounded with *me*, and you might hear something about "that silly Perkins girl," — that's what they call her here, — and you might think it was *me*. Joe says he don't see how I know that it *isn't* me they mean. The *idea* of it! But, as I say, you know what *Joe* is.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

XVI.

FLASHPORT, August, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

If I was a married woman I wouldn't sit on the piazza and tell all my business to *another* married woman, from the name of the minister who married me to the number of cotton I used for the knit edging on my *petticoat;* but that is just the way they *do*, and you can't promenade the piazza at *all* without getting snarled up in their everlasting worsted, or tumbling over the rockers on their chairs; and you have to keep saying "Excuse me," and "Beg your pardon," when you don't mean it in the *least*. And after you've passed by, their voices all sort of lower *down*, and you hear their chairs scrape up to each other, and if there is *any* weak place in your *morals* or your *clothes* it is

just tossed round that gang like a *tennis*-ball, Poesie, dear.

To be *sure* they don't have much else to *do*, and Mrs. Groing Tuff (a sister-in-law of *Maud*) said to me the other day that she used to feel just as I did before she was married. She used to look with perfect *scorn* and *wonder* on people that sat about gossiping when there were so many *nicer* things to do. But she says if I were a married woman, with one or two children, and a house and servants, and a husband on my mind, and no one cared to have me go out rowing, or play tennis, or walk around seeing moon and sunrises, and I began to have corns, and my back teeth began to ache, and instead of thinking the frogs and crickets romantic they only reminded me of malarial regions and neuralgia, and music began to grow kind of tame because I didn't waltz any more, and it made me feel kind of blue instead of lively, she said she guessed *I* would want to sit round and have some one to talk with

about good common things, such as clothes and people's reputations.

She said it was no use trying to carry on a cultivated conversation. She says there isn't one woman in ten who can keep it up more than half an hour a day for a regular *thing*. She says she intends to read everything that there is *out*, and keep herself informed the best she *can*, and she likes to talk about music and literature, and religion *some;* but she says for real honest, downright enjoyment, that will take your mind off *yourself*, there is nothing like talking about *people*. She says she expects they talk about *her*, and *she* don't care if it gives them *half* the enjoyment it does to her.

All the same I don't think I ever *could* do *so*, if the romance died out of *everything*. Now, there is *Maud*, — she has got all over *her* romance, she says, and *she* never sits about gossiping; but, then, come to *think* of it, she hasn't got any husband to

depress her *spirits*. *I* say she is all over her romance because *she* says so. She says when she goes to parties and picnics *now* all she thinks of is what they are going to have to *eat;* and she says she has got so she doesn't care much if her hair *doesn't* crimp good and her face shines a little after dinner, so long as she feels *comfortable;* and she is always anxious to wait for a horse-car in the evening at Temple place, instead of walking way home, as she used to, and thinking it was delightful; and love stories make her laugh, and she doesn't fall in love with *languid* young men any more, but with good, smart ones that can fly around and make her comfortable; and she says she hasn't looked at the moon for any *sentimental* purpose for *years* — doesn't even know when it's full — and she don't *care*. And she doesn't care half as much about the first *violets* as she does about the first *oysters;* but she is a *splendid* girl, and has

got as much *go* to her as a roller coaster; and don't you ever *tell* her I *told* you all this, because Maud trusts me a *great* deal, for she knows I *never* tell what she tells me, — I'd *die* first. Some people don't like Maud at *all*, — Mr. Hansoff, from Philadelphia, for instance, doesn't, and Mr. Brown, of Boston.

Mr. Hansoff is very tall and large and dark, and he wears glasses, and he speaks in a loud, firm voice, as if he didn't want people to *miss* what he was saying, or ask him to *repeat* it, for he shouldn't *do* it; and after you ask him anything, or even say "Good morning" to him, he looks at you suspiciously for an instant, as if to see if you were *fooling*, or if you really *did* dare to speak to him; and when he *does* talk to a girl he makes her talk real loud *with* him, so to *prove* to people how kind he has been to draw her out, and he always rearranges his glasses when he is going to talk about Boston, as if he meant

to *look* you down if he couldn't *talk* you down, and he calls me Miss *Pcarkins* when we are playing tennis; he never *speaks* to me hardly any *other* time, and he is always quarrelling about rules of games, and then settling it *his* way by laughing real loud and going on playing; and *he* don't like Maud, because when he first came she made a mistake in putting his name down for some tickets for something, and got his residence down as *Boston;* and Mr. *Brown* doesn't like Maud because she got him mixed up with Mr. Hansoff, and put him down as from *Philadelphia.* Not but that he'd feel awfully swell if he *did* live in Philadelphia, but he hates Mr. *Hansoff*, so it made him *mad* to think he should imagine for a minute that he would be *willing* to even be *mistaken* for a Philadelphian; *he* is one of these young men that isn't satisfied with *Boston;* he calls it *slow* and *provincial*, and is always going to *New York;* and he finds fault with the horse-

cars in Boston and wants an elevated, and the Boston theatres are *nothing*, and you can't get a good *cheese sandwich* made in Boston, nor hear good sermons, and you could roll Nantasket up and put it in the elephant's *ear* at *Coney Island*, and Music Hall Garden is *nothing* to the Casino, and so on and so forth; and yet year after year goes by and finds that young man in Boston and bothering the same people, who wish he'd take his old comparisons and go off for good on the New York and New England express limited. But I *must* tell you about Flashport.

I *did* mean to tell you how Brown and Hansoff glare at each other, and try to sit each other out with Cecilia Rosamond Brown (she is no relation to the Bitter Brown, as we call him, although he makes just as much stock out of it as he *can* make out of such a mean little name), and do lots of other entertaining things; but I want you to know what a *lovely* place it is, and how we are drummed

into our clothes and drummed out of them, and eat to music, and sleep to music, and have such a beautiful bang and whiz and whirr all the time that Joe says he feels as if he had had mixed drinks for a week, and ma says her head feels like an egg-beater, and I feel — well, *I* feel as if my *clothes* wouldn't last. They say there is some *beautiful* scenery about the house, but I haven't had time to see it yet. We *had* a large barge party one day, just to ride off and *see* the beauties of the country; but we all got to talking about the way the Crash House was run, and the way the girls carry on at Mount Desert, and we forgot to look at the scenery at *all*, and yet we heard the old driver swearing about it for two or three days, when we didn't trouble him to show us a *thing*.

Some men are *so* inconsistent, the same as Joe, the other day, was *so* mad because there were ten of us wanted to go sailing, and we got him to make arrangements and hire the

boat and everything, and then we remembered that we had been invited over to the Prynky House to a *lawn* party, and we couldn't *go* sailing, of course, and Joe was so *mad* he took all the men in the house, and went sailing off to Murder Reef, and never brought them in for dancing in the evening. So *hateful*, just as if we could break our *engagement;* but the girls were awfully chilly to us at the Prynky House because we didn't bring any men with us. Humph! 'Twa'n't *our* fault, *was* it, Poesie, dear?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XVII.

FLASHPORT, August, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

It is *so* provoking to have to *write* you, instead of *talking* to you. Of course I mean to write you very *plainly*, and you think I *do;* but there are *thousands* of things I can't describe to you, any more than I could holler it across Boston Common. You see, I want to tell you about a perfectly *elegant* fellow that is here; but I could no more *write* it, — in fact, there is nothing *to* write *yet*, for he has never spoken to me except to say, "Beg pardon!" or "Not at all," which doesn't seem anything to *write*, *does* it, Poesie, dear?

But if I could just see you a *minute*, and *tell* you about it, I could make you understand what a perfectly *delicious* way he says

it•in; and after he has got *through* saying it, and sits *down* or stands *up*, whichever the occasion *demands*, the way in which he strokes his mustache and *looks* at you makes you feel as you do when you've got a whole box of candy that you haven't *opened*. Everything he *does*, from biting the end off his cigar to helping his grandmother out of the coach, is so perfectly *beautiful* that you'd willingly be the cigar, or his grandmother either. None of us girls are acquainted with him yet, though I think it seems real odd and inhospitable *not* to be, for he has been here an hour and a *half*, and all we have done is to keep walking by him, and making him move his chair or cane, so as to make him *speak*, though Maud and I *did* leave for ten or fifteen minutes to run into the glass and silver room and peek through the blinds, for we calculated he was sitting right *against* them, and it would be *such* a good opportunity; but he wasn't as near as I *thought*,

and all we could see was the soles of his boots as he rocked forward.

But even that would have satisfied *me*, if Maud hadn't heard the gong for dinner, and she wouldn't stay in there another *minute*. Mean, wasn't she? But then it wouldn't do to let him interfere with her dinner, for she never would have liked him forever *afterwards*. Some people are in a dreadful hurry for their meals, and hang round peeking in the dining-room windows, and rattling the door to see if it isn't *ready*, till the servants and Mr. Macher are nearly *wild*. Mr. Macher is a real nice man. He is the clerk, and has a *great* deal of attention to distribute. He has to ask the different girls whether they liked their bath, and if they succeeded in heating their crimping-irons over the lamp he gave them, and if they enjoyed their friend's visit, and if they caught the steamer they were after the afternoon *before;* and one family *left* because the daughter spilled some

tea on the front of her *dress*, and Mr. Macher forgot to ask her the next day if she got it out. Joe said he thought *we'd* better leave, because he noticed Macher sharpened Maud Tuff's pencil a great deal better than he did *mine*, and he neglected to tell him what a nice hand he wrote when he made out a check for him.

But they say he is an *elegant* hotel clerk, and draws a *great* deal of custom by his tender *manner*. The way in which he takes or hands you your *key* is enough to make you pay ten dollars a *minute*, if it is necessary; and he keeps a little box of stuff under his desk to rub on to our hands when they are tanned; and he'll shake boys for the mothers, and get up fishing-parties for the fathers, and he *never* says that he is tired, or that it is going to rain, or that your freckles show, or that another girl is handsome; and if that isn't a nice man I don't know what *could* be; of course I have heard

several *grumpy* persons *say* that they wish he'd keep his mind on his weekly bills and the annunciators, and the carriage orders and telegrams; but *I* think he'd be awfully stupid if he did, shouldn't *you* think so?

I'm going down just as soon as I have *finished* this to ask him who this new young man is; of course I won't ask him right *out*, but I'll kind of tack round, and I won't seal my letter till I find out, for I know by this time you are *just* as interested as I am. You mustn't think there are no young men here, and that we have to put little hints in the paper about it in *sort* of a joking, but *really desperate* way, in hopes they will *bring* some down. No, *indeed!* We have got the best bar on the coast (Joe says), and Cecilia Rosamond Brown, and *those* are sufficient to keep us in young men all *summer*, I *guess*. Of course we are not *crowded* with them.

In the morning, on the piazzas and the lawn, all you will *see* is that dreary, uninteresting stretch of white lawn and striped seersucker and embroidery and fringe, with hardly ever a bright spot of pantaloons; but there are enough come at night to keep up your interest in *life* and give you *some* motive for putting on your best clothes, and although there is hardly one *apiece*, you are always pleasantly *excited*, either because you've just got one away from another girl or think you are *going* to, and you never know what a day *may* bring forth, anyway. It is so pleasant to feel that you *may* meet some young man the next corner you turn, and at any rate they are about the *house*. Now, the girls at the Prynky House can turn their eyes in *any* direction, *any* time of day, and never a young man can *they* see, and it gives them sort of a *hopeless*, *anxious* look, *something* like the Runover girls, but not *exactly*, for *they* have lived *down* their hopes,

and the girls at the Prynky House *can't* live them down; they are always in *hopes* some one will come along, and they have that *expectant* look which distinguishes them from other girls down here. When you drive by there you see them sitting around in little *groups*, as dreary and quiet as if they were waiting for a Greek *examination*, and when they have picnics and excursions and things you will see three or four *girls* solemnly making the arrangements, and the whole thing is carried on in sort of a temperance grove-meeting style, which is, of course, very *respectable* and *solid*, but awfully-*poky*, Poesie, dear.

The girls here do *say* that they got a gentleman in bathing with them one day, and he rashly proposed teaching them to *swim;* and those girls got so pleased and giddy that they kept him in an *hour*, kicking him in the chin and stomach, as girls *will* do when *they* are learning, and

the poor man had pneumonia, or something, and nearly *died*. That is something I'd *never* do. I attempted to *once*. There was a *very* swell young man at the hotel where I was, and one night we were promenading after dancing, and the moon was shining, and the waves were just *rippling* a little, you know, and the music was so *very* fetching, and he asked me if he couldn't teach me to *swim* the next morning, and wouldn't ma bring me down at 11.30, and let me *try*, and he would be so *very* careful; and he looked so beautifully in his dress suit, and I looked so nice in my white Surah, that we both were *very* much delighted with each other, and I dreamed of him all night, and I have since learned he dreamed of me the *first* and *only* time; not but that we are the best of *friends*, and he is just as nice as *can* be, *only*— We *met* the next morning, Poesie Plympton, at 11.30, and there was a cold north-west *wind*, and

the surf was so high that the beach was all *hobbly*, and my nose was red, and it didn't seem as if there was any *end* to my arms and legs. And as for *him!* Well, it is an altogether different thing standing on a dry, smooth piazza, with all your best clothes on, with music and moonlight, *contemplating* going in swimming with a young man who has all *his* best clothes on, from meeting that same young man on an open beach, with *no* romantic accessories, and *very* few clothes on, and you will never see me so reckless *again* as to destroy *all* the romance about young men by going in *bathing* with them. That makes me think I *must* go down and find out who that young man is, for fear he *might* get away on the noon boat. Good-by.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

P.S. — That fellow is that other Perkins girl's beau! *Should* you have thought he would have sat round on the piazza so, right under our noses, waiting for us to *admire* him? Some men are *so* conceited!

P. P.

XVIII.

FLASHPORT, August, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

There are *moments*, even in *Flashport*, when you feel as if life is a delusion and a snare, and you'd like to slap *somebody*. You don't particularly know who it *is* you want to slap, but you'd just feel better if you *could*. *This* is one of the *moments*. I started early this *morning* to get tripped up. I *wanted* to go to *walk*, and Maud Tuff *laughed* at me. She is beginning to get in with a set from *New York*, that are — Well, you don't know just what *to* say about them; they are just like *lots* of sets you meet round in different places. You don't just want to be *cool* to them, for they will only *laugh* at you and say you are stiff; and you can't really say that what they do is *wicked*, and yet you know in the bottom of

your boots that it isn't just *right*, and you don't want to be *seen* with them; and yet they have about all the fun there is in the *house;* and when they apologize and say they didn't mean to harrow any one's feelings, they were only having a good time, after they've had an *unusually* fierce racket, you feel sort of *mean* and *narrow* to draw down your mouth at them. Sometimes you get in with the *respectable* crowd, and you feel real safe and *secure;* but you will hear this *shady* crowd having an awfully good time over something, and to save your *life* you can't help wishing you were *with* them; and yet when you are with them you feel kind of *scared*, and that is the way you go on. But Maud just *likes* them, or at least she says they serve her good amusement for her summer, and she can be *independent*, because she is good-looking and has stacks of money.

Well, she wouldn't go *walking* with me this morning, because she said she had rather

play billiards than moon round offering herself up as a sacrifice to hooking cows and tramps, and get decorated with cobwebs and huckleberry spiders, under the impression that she is communing with nature and taking exercise. Well, then I went and asked Cora Swallow if *she* wouldn't go. She is always sitting round with a *shawl* on, and giving little coughs as if there was something very mysterious in her throat that *we* didn't know anything *about.* And she always breaks up a card-party, because she can't sit in *draughts*, and picnics because the *grass* is damp. But I thought perhaps I could drag her along a half a mile or so. But *she* wouldn't go because she expected her husband down at eleven, and he would hate to find her *gone;* he always wanted to *find* her when he got home. Humph! only because he wants the door-key and a clean shirt, I guess, for he don't *care* any more or *notice* her any more than a crack in the piazza *floor;* and I think if we could

take her sailing and get her becalmed for a *week*, he would give us all a pension for life.

Well, I just went round that piazza and tried to find a real *healthy* woman *without* a shawl and a husband, and I couldn't *do* it. One said she wouldn't go because she had got a little pain behind her ear that she *thought* she got a week ago last Friday, swinging in a hammock and creating such a *draught;* and she should *never* get in a hammock *again*. And I hope she will, just *once* more, and break her neck. And another one wouldn't go because she had on her slippers, and she said she wouldn't go up two flights to change them. And another one said her husband told her not to go off on *tramps* with only *women*, for fear she might get *frightened*. *He* is a little, *thin*, wizzled man, that looks like a pricked blister, and he is so weak he can't reverse when he waltzes, and I don't believe he could get the upper hand of a black *spider*. I couldn't find a *woman*

who would go, and, as a last *resort*, I concluded I'd ask that *giggling* young thing. I have never had anything to *do* with her, but *her* mother and *mine* have exchanged mustard plasters and seidlitz powders, and I thought I would *venture;* so I tried not to be a bit *patronizing*, but asked her real *kindly* if she wouldn't like to go to *walk* with me.

First she jumped when I spoke to her; then she giggled; then she said I was "real kynd," but she'd sprained her ankle the night before, when she was "on the rocks with Cholly," and she guessed she wouldn't go. Hateful thing! I don't *believe* she sprained her ankle, and she was out on the rocks with her "*par*," or my name isn't Peppermint *Perkins;* and to think I couldn't *tell* her so, and could only say, "No consequence, sorry for you;" but I was so mad I started to go to walk *alone*, for I wasn't going to be floored in that way. Of course I didn't feel very *lively* setting out alone, but I *pre-*

tended I did, and I thought how *Clara Smart* would have done under the circumstances. I had walked quite a distance, when, in going through a field, I met a *cow*, and, although I tried to assume the attitude and feelings that *Clara* would have done, I *couldn't* help feeling *scared*. I tried to feel *self-possessed* and *calm*, and walk leisurely across the field; but the cow *moved*.

I have noticed *since* that she only meant to brush a fly off with her *nose*, but I didn't think of it at the *time*, and just ran to the stone wall and got over it, and sat down and shivered for an hour and a half; and I thought, supposing it should grow *darker* and *darker*, and they would all be inquiring about me, and supper time should come and I shouldn't *be* there, and ma and Joe would get so wild, and they'd send out a party with lanterns to search for me, and how sad it would be if they couldn't *find* me at *all;* and I would have cried, only I had on my red satine and I didn't want to *spot* it, and there

was going to be a hop, I knew, and I didn't want to be pink-eyed and *blowsy;* so I thought I'd wait till I was a *little* more desperate, but I felt bad *enough*, for I knew that dreadful cow stood there, and when she got away I was no better *off*, for I was *lost*, and I never was good on *locality;* but pretty soon (now don't laugh at me, Poesie, dear) I heard some one *coming*, and I just peeked up and looked over, and it was the girl that waits on our table, and I said, "O Mary! *how* did you come here, and *will* you show me the way home?"

And do you *know* I was only out back of the pigpen to the *hotel*, only, never having gone off the piazza except straight to the beach, I did not *know* it, and that girl had to drop her swill-pail that she was carrying for the *cook*, and sit down on the ground and *laugh*, — mean thing! — but I told her if she wouldn't *tell* any one I wouldn't make any more fuss about my *breakfasts* or keep her running for a hot potato till the cook swore at her; and she said she

wouldn't, only, you see, I'm under a *terrible* bondage. I wanted an extra apple-fritter to-day at dinner, but I saw the gleam of triumph in her eye, and I didn't *dare* ask for it.

Joe says it was a very narrow escape, and he is going to show me all over the grounds to-morrow, so I won't be afraid to go to walk again. He says the locality about the swill-pail and ash-barrel *is* dangerous, and he thinks I am the only lady in the house that ever went so *far*. I don't quite know whether he is trying to be sarcastic or *means* it, because I was so afraid some one would see me coming back with Mary that it really *seemed* five *miles* before I got here, and that is the way things have tripped me up all day.

Even *Sam Snapp* has got the *cholera-morbus*, and, do you know, the ladies in the house don't give him a chance to get *well*. They all want to doctor him, and Sam is so *obliging* and desirous to be *popular* that

he *lets* them all, and some are allopathy and some are homœopathy, and one is mind over matter, and one is blue-glass cure, and one a water cure; and they all go in three times a day, after they've had a good nice meal, to get his *symptoms*, and poor Sam don't dare tell *one* woman any more or less than *another* for fear they won't like it, and they all want him to say that *their* medicine helps him, and he has to keep *tally*, and all the doctor does, who drives over from Porgyville, is to smoke with *Macher* and flirt with us girls. He sees Sam ten minutes, and sits round the piazza two hours, and he's *lovely*. He took four of us girls over to his house, the other evening, to eat *peaches*. His wife isn't a bit nice-looking, and looks so *cross;* but he is as *pleasant*. We could hear him scolding her half an hour before we went home, but he came in just as pleasant to *us*, and gave us loads of peaches to carry home.

Joe says it is strange she looked so *cross* when he must have saved her the trouble of preserving any of the peaches; and he says he should think it would have *pleased* her when she was hot and tired from her work in the *kitchen* to see her husband drive up with a load of freshly dressed, stylish young girls. She doesn't keep any servant; *he* says he wouldn't have one in the *house*, he would rather have his cooking *clean*, and it seems more *domestic* to have his *wife* doing it. Joe says one of these hot and tired mornings, when we girls are pinning rose-buds into the doctor's white linen coat, he's going over to see what view his *wife* has on the subject. Just as if he would do such a silly thing!

Joe don't like him because he told him he mustn't smoke so much; and if Joe had to give up *smoking* we should all have to go out of reach of a *telephone* even, for, besides liking the *smoke*, he feels *graceful*, I

think, managing his cigar. What do you suppose a man would *do* if you should take away his *cigars*, and *canes*, and *pockets*, and let him have his hands on his mind all *day?* You see I am very reflective, and am thrown back on my thoughts, because *everything* has been so *contrary* to-day. I guess I'll have some clams for supper. *Do* they have Little Necks in Venice?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XIX.

FLASHPORT, September, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I've no *doubt* the foliage will be perfectly *beautiful* in a few weeks, as Joe says; but I don't see *how* I am going to enjoy it if I haven't any *clothes*. It's all very well for a *man* to talk about getting them easy enough. All they have to do is to pick out a sample, be measured, and swear at their tailor till he gets them right. *They* never think that they'll try and alter them themselves, and get into a muss over the collar, or the shoulder seams, or the gathers in the *skirt;* and keep carrying the old thing back and forth till it gets all tumbled up, and you'd like to sell it to the old-clothes woman for fifty cents.

A man *never* has any trouble about dress-

ing, *anyway*. Just *think*, all they have to do is to hurl themselves into everything, make a dash at their hair, and they are all ready for *anything*. Even their *necktie* gets into nice little folds, so it will tie itself up, and all they have to worry about is if they've got the right boots on the right feet, and haven't got their hats on hind-side foremost; and then think of the *discouraging* length of time between our first button and the last hair-pin, or *vice versa*.

I don't quite *remember* how *you* dress yourself, Poesie, dear; but *I* always commence with my *boots*, and I never *fail* to wish that I was a what-you-call-it islander, with only ear-rings and a yellow petticoat to put on.

The other *morning* I was *determined* I would get downstairs before that *other* Perkins girl, for there are three *very* creamy fellows here from New York, and, if you must *know* it, there is a very large inside track before

breakfast when you are racing for taffy and delicate little attentions. Well, I got both my boots laced up, and I found I'd got them on *wrong*, and before I got them on *right* I *knew* that girl was almost dressed, for her room is next to mine, and I could hear her humming, and girls *never* hum till they get their hair up; and I hurried so I got the hook on my *dress-binding* caught on a hair-pin in my *head*, and there I was, perfectly helpless and *speechless* with despair, and I had to kick on Joe's door till he came in and rescued me, and he was *ever* so kind, and said if I wouldn't mention to ma that I saw him playing pool down at the Chady House he'd help me *out*, and he got those fellows out rowing and *kept* them out till that Perkins girl was just *furious*, and *I* had my hair all up again, and I've worked him a *lovely* little "Let brotherly love continue" motto to put up in his room.

Joe helps me out of a *great* many puddles,

although I really forget to appreciate him until I'm in the middle of another one. He says he knows all about it, for he was there *himself* once, but it must have been a *long* while ago.

Joe is one of those men you never can *imagine* as having been *young*, though he is *constantly* alluding to it as if it was a last week's circus. I should be very sorry to have you think that I feel *unreasonably* spiteful toward that girl, but when a girl goes about with her eyes just ferreting *out* things, I just like to *accommodate* her by giving her something to *ferret.*

Every one that comes to the Crash House has to be inspected, like a trunk going through the Custom House, to see their *worth;* and that other *Perkins* girl is the inspector that knows whether you've got diamonds sewed up in your corsets or *not.*

You'd never suspect it in the *world,* she goes about so gentle and sweet and *quiet;*

one would think she was just *engaged*, or was trying to keep a corn-plaster in place, and all the *time* she knows if there is a button off your *boot* or if you hang your jacket up by the collar instead of the *loop*. And she is always descending upon you when you have any *gentleman* with you to *lend* her something or tell you something *important*, and then she'll cling like a crab to sea-weed till *he* goes or *you* go, or the *moon* goes, or the *house* is shut up, and then she'll tell you the next morning she didn't leave for fear of being *impolite*, and she hopes she didn't *intrude;* and you can't bear to have her discount you on politeness, so you murmur something between your teeth about "Not in the least," or "Certainly not," and then you kick a chair or something over after she has gone; so you can *see* how she breaks up your Peppermint's comfort and makes her feel as gritty as a clam-bake.

Speaking of clam-bakes *reminds* me to

tell you about my learning to *row*. I think it is an accomplishment that *every* girl ought to have, because you may be in need of it at *any* unexpected moment. Why, Cora Shallow's husband got so mad at her one day when they were rowing. She says all it was *about* was that he was going the next week down to *Moosehead Lake*, and *she* was going to *Narragansett Pier*, and she didn't see why they couldn't both go on the same *road;* and because he said they *couldn't* she thinks he is going off on some racket, and she commenced to scold him and cry, — and of course he *is* up to some sly thing or he wouldn't have refused her such a simple *thing;* but, anyway, he got mad and jumped right into the water and swam ashore and *left* her there in the boat in the middle of the *water*, and there she had to *stand* and wave her *hand*, like Nancy Lee, till some men after lobster cages saw her and towed her ashore.

So you *see* how important it is to know

how to row, for if Cora could have *rowed* her *husband* would have been the one that got left.

And, then, it develops the muscles so nicely, the doctor from Porgyville says, and so of course I ought to learn, and it is *so* interesting. Of course it is rather hard on the *boat* and the *young man*, but one must expect disadvantages about *everything*.

Of course I can't row *alone* yet; it requires a *great* deal of patience to learn, and Mr. Damson (from New York, you know) has had the utmost *patience* and *kindness* in teaching me. Why, we've been out afternoon after afternoon, until *long* after dark, just trying to see if I *could* row alone, and we got so interested and were so in *earnest* we would go out again in the evening after supper, when ma would *let* me; and she generally *would* let me go with Mr. Damson, for he is so perfectly *irreproachable* and *unquestionable* in his manners, and his brother is an Epis-

copal minister, and *he* came very *near* being one, only he is so near-sighted he concluded *not* to be.

Joe said he supposed he was afraid of tumbling over the vines in the vineyard, and he says it is wonderful how *unconscious* and *ungrateful* we are for some of the curses that are removed from us. But Joe never *did* like Episcopalians, and calls the surplices they wear Mother Hubbards, so he didn't mean anything *personal* of Mr. *Damson*.

Why, he says (Mr. Damson) that he would no more let anything happen to a young lady in his charge than — I've forgotten just what he said he'd do rather than *have* anything happen; but he says it in such a *solemn*, *tender* way that it's enough to stop a roller-coaster. Joe says that way would have been worth ten thousand dollars a year to him when he came to the "Let us pray" part.

He is very careful, too, about your getting cold, and is always anxious to put your

shawl on if there is the least *draught* or *dampness*, and ma insists upon it he wears the sleeves to my dresses out putting my jacket on; but I tell her she ought to be glad nowadays, when fellows are so sentimental and spooney, to find a young man who will look after my *health*, but she says she should be *more* glad if he kept half an eye on *her* health, and didn't keep her sitting with the wharf-rats all the evening waiting for her daughter.

You know ma doesn't like chaperoning very well. She says it makes her feel as if I were an escaped convict, or on parole, or some other dreadful thing, to sit round watching me. She says she thinks it must tempt girls to be *dreadfully* giddy when their chaperones are not *looking*, and she wonders they act as well as they *do*. She says the idea of getting a party of respectable, well-born, and well-bred girls together, and then saying their characters are all *lost* if they happen to

be without some poor, deluded, old or young *married* woman to look *after* them, is *absurd;* but she keeps on *doing* it just the same, which *Joe* says shows that either *she* or *I* haven't *got* any character.

Didn't I commence to write to you about the foliage? Or was it about my *clothes?* And how I ever got round on to my *character* I can't *see;* but it doesn't make any difference as long as you hear from one or the other, — *does* it, Poesie, dear?

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

XX.

FLASHPORT, September, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Don't you think September is a *beautiful* month? I am a perfect *enthusiast* over the weather. *Such* cool mornings that your crimps *never* come out, and the *evenings* are so frigid that the gentlemen all have to come into the *parlor*. And such gorgeous autumn *leaves* as we are beginning to have! Mr. Damson and I have gathered *cartloads* of them, and have walked *miles* and *miles* to see them turn, and I am always particular to bring home a large *branch* for that other Perkins girl to see; for it's like waving a red flag at a bull to show it to her. She sits on the piazza with her embroidery, and the Life of some old person, — I can't remember *whose*, — and pretends

she doesn't care for tramping; but I notice she looks sort of sea-sick when I come up the steps with Frank.

Frank is Mr. *Damson*. He *asked* me to call him so. I wouldn't for a *long* while, but finally we got separated in a swamp, and after I'd hollered "Mr. Damson!" thirteen *times* I concluded I'd be *sociable*, and call him anything he *wanted*, for there were several large cows *very* near; and, although Joe says he doesn't see what earthly use I could put Dmason to in an earnest attack of a cow, he was all I had *with* me, and I knew if I *was* a little familiar I could freeze him up as soon as we got away from the *cows*.

Cows are *dreadful* things, Poesie, dear, although they look so lovely in Mr. Pierce's pictures; but he isn't *honest* about them: he always paints them as *calm* and *peaceful*, just chewing up their tongue, and their eyes half shut up, and most *always* he puts a *fence* in, but he *never* paints

them prancing around at you in an open *field* with no *fence* near, and their eyes *big* and *glaring*, and their tails sort of wagging in the air. If I was going to paint, I'd paint things *honest*, though of course they wouldn't look so *handsome*. It seems as if cows were *never* so disagreeable as they are this year, and there is *one* old thing that sees me two miles *off*, and I have to govern myself *accordingly*.

I have become *very* well acquainted with the country since Mr. Damson came. He is a *great* botanist, and can tell you the *most* about your corsage bouquet. Why, he spent all one *morning* just examining and describing one I had on, and Joe said we were the most interested couple he ever saw, and he guessed he'd call ma, she'd be so pleased to hear about it *too*. But before he did we had got all *through*, for you can analyze anything *very* quick, you know, especially a *corsage bouquet*.

Of course I suppose you will be *suspicious* and *curious* about Mr. Damson, for a girl *never* can do anything nowadays without people think she is *engaged*, and it is so *absurd!*

Now all we *do* is to go out for a little row before *breakfast;* and, if it isn't *very* crowded, he sits at our side of the table at breakfast, because he generally sends me in a bouquet, and I want to *thank* him for it, and we want to talk about where we will go after breakfast,— for that is the time we take our walks, and I am *very* much improved in walking. I can walk way up to *dinner* time, and not notice it at *all.*

Of course we have to rest *some*, and then there are such picturesque walls to *rest* on. We find a nicer one every *day*, though Joe insists *upon* it we sit on the same wall every *time.* But he says he supposes it is new to *us* every time. Men at Joe's age are so *silly!*

Mr. Damson generally eats *dinner* at our

"OF COURSE WE HAVE TO REST *SOME*." — p. 188.

table because they put a lot of *transient* at *his*, and he is so fastidious he doesn't like to *eat* with them; and we like to be *together*, so we can make a rush for the hammock under the apple-tree, for he always reads *poetry* to me after our dinner.

I can't say I really *enjoy* the poetry, but I try to *accustom* myself to it, for I find that all gentlemen *like* to read poetry; and then it makes other girls *mad*, for they think you are really *enjoying* it, and that shows a superior mind. And then it *looks* nice,— sort of like novels, where the men all lay round way through the story at the heroine's feet, with a "world of passion in their uplifted eyes;" only Joe says it never mentions the grass stains on their pants, or the strain it must be on the back of their neck. Joe is very practical, you know.

Mr. Damson has been reading me something *beautiful*. I *never* can remember the name of it. It is something they put on tombstones,

and it is all about a young man that died, and this poet was his friend, and wrote 675 *verses* about it. It is all very *touching* and *dreary;* but I don't see how he could *keep* so dreary through 675 verses, and if I listened to it *very* much I am afraid I should have dyspepsia, so I try to fix my mind on other *things*, and I do *nicely;* and then we go rowing as soon as our dinner is digested, — though I must *say* it doesn't digest very quick on that *tombstone* poem, — and I get my spirits up quite high by *supper*-time.

We have been in the habit of *meandering*, and *philandering* I suppose you might call it, on warmer evenings; but since it has grown so chilly ma has struck, with several *other* girls' mothers, in making a fog-horn of herself, as she says, and we sit in the parlor, and glance at each other from our different corners like a lot of circus animals that have got to be made into a "Happy Family," whether they want to or *not.*

Cecilia Rosamond *Brown* is glued on to the piano-stool, and revolves like the Lower Light, with a young man at each corner and one at her ear. Once in a while she strikes a chord to keep up *appearances*, or the young man at her ear says "fugue," or "symphony," or "tempo," in a loud voice, just to keep the rest of the crowd *comfortable;* but he *doesn't*, for every one is very *uncomfortable* to think they can't hear what he says *between* "fugue" and "symphony," at least those that are *listening*. *I* am not listening, because I play cribbage with Mr. Damson. Our board isn't very good, and our pegs are most of them *lost*, but we have *delightful* games.

I don't like to get *too* deep into a game, because I want to keep my eye on that Perkins girl, so she won't descend on me and interrupt what little time I have with Damson; so I keep one eye on *him* and one on *her*, and she keeps one on me and one on the piano fiends; and the New York group

whisper five minutes and yell ten, and the Bitter Brown tries to keep *up* with them because they are from *New York;* and they glare at C. Rosamond Brown because she won't evacuate the piano-stool, and she glares at them because she's *defiant;* and the group that always want to play these orphan-asylum games, like "Roll-the-cover" and "Button," glare at the New Yorks because they think they are *fast*, and the women with rick-rack embroidery and splashers and Arasene work just keep their eyes on their *work*, so as not to miss a *word* that is being said about the room; and Mr. Hansoff, from Philadelphia, plays cards and *disputes* all the evening, and everybody gets real *mad* and thinks they will go home next *day*; but they *don't;* and the next evening they do it all *over* again, and the newspaper correspondents put us down as the "happy family circle at the Crash House, whom the chilly evenings and the glow of the fireside bring closer together."

Humph! They *never* get anything right; any man that will write as he did last week that the hop at the Prynky House was a "dazzling and gay affair;" that "the decorations were in the most elegant taste," and that "manly dignity and womanly beauty tripped the light fantastic until the wee sma' hours," when everybody *knows* that there were fifty-six girls and only *three* men, and one of those was the *hotel clerk*, and all the decoration was a stick of sumach over one chandelier, and a flag of 1812 over one *door*, and their music didn't come because *women* hired it; and they had to get the hostler to fiddle, and he played till he broke every *string* on his old fiddle, and they broke *all* up before nine o'clock, and every blessed *soul* of them was in bed by half-past *ten*. Any man that is such an old Ananias as *that* ought to be boycotted in *decent* places.

But I was going to *tell* you — don't you think the people down here are *absurd* and

unreasonable enough to say that Mr. Damson is *waiting* upon me; just *think* — with no foundation *whatever;* it doesn't seem nowadays as if a girl can even *look* at a young man without something being inferred; don't *you* think so, and *would* you dare to say as much as they do on such a *little* foundation? Just write me that you *wouldn't.*

Your abused

PEPPERMINT.

XXI.

BOSTON, September, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Joe said if I wouldn't sing, or even *hum*, "Home again, home again from a foreign shore," between the Crash House and our front door, he'd take me to a "Promenade" at Music Hall. I don't think *that* was much for him to offer, for I happen to remember he said he liked them, because it was such a *handy*, *cheap* way to *entertain* a girl; you could feed her up there, and take her right home without any additional trouble and expense of restaurants, and she thinks she's had a lovely time, — "so Bohemian," "so democratic." He says he finds the majority of girls think they are having a *gorgeous* time if they can get their clothes full of tobacco-smoke and "walk round." He doesn't appreciate nice *music*, you know,

and says he doesn't see the use of troubling yourself to *listen* to Neuendorfi's orchestra when it only costs *twenty-five cents*. But I think it is all *very* crispy, if the Bitter Brown *doesn't* think it is as nice as the Casino in New York; and Maud Tuff and I have been trying all the *morning* to see if we could carry five beers at once, as the waiters *do* there, — I mean in one *hand*, you know.

You see by my having gone that I *didn't* sing, or even *hum*, "Home, Sweet Home," though it was *very* hard not to, same as a picnic party *never* can get along without singing "Old Oaken Bucket" and "Speed Away." Well, we have shaken Flashport for this year. I promised seven and a half young men (the half is for a boy about sixteen), the day before we *left*, that I would go back to the Crash House next *year*. But I just *wondered* the next day how I ever could have *done* it, they looked so differently in their travelling clothes, and I felt so *very* little acquainted with them.

We *all* looked so differently when we came to go, and I felt like howling like a dog in a strange place. But it was *very* interesting.

You can always tell a woman's *character* by her *bonnet*, I think, and some of them that morning were a *great* disappointment to me. Maud Tuff says she never will be subjected to such criticism, so she puts her bonnet on for all the religious services in the house, and people get *used* to it, and don't say, "Is *that* Miss *Tuff* — why, I am *surprised!*" in a sort of a *sad, disappointed* way; for you know people *always* look better in their free-and-easy clothes than they do in their *polite* ones. Of course, on some accounts, it is nice to get back from the beach. The *beefsteak* is plumper, I must say, and the *sheets* don't feel so cold when you put your feet down in them at night, and it's nice not to feel like damp salt in the *evening;* but there is *something* I seem to miss very much, and I can't make out whether it's the *clams* or *Damson*. He said

some *very* interesting things before he left, sort of *vague* and *exciting*, like the grab-boxes at fairs or conversation lozenges before you *read* them. I think it is so much nicer than to have any one say anything right *out*, without any mistake *about* it, don't *you*, Poesie, dear? I shall miss him *very* much, if he *is* what I miss and I don't exactly see what I can have to make up for him.

Joe says he'll get me a Jew's-harp or *anything* that will make up for him. He said lots of other disagreeable things, for Joe feels *very* uncomfortable, he is getting so *large*, and gets very jealous of these slim fellows that look something like *scissors*, you know. Joe *will* wear a white flannel suit, you see, and when you meet him coming toward you in a *hurry* it reminds you of the balloon-jib-topsail of the *Puritan* something. Everything looks *just* the same in Boston as *ever*, only the flower men have got china asters to sell instead of daisies and nasturtiums, as they had when I

went *away*. How they ever manage to stand so long without wooden legs *I* don't *see* — I mean the *men*, of course, not the *asters*.

Don't you have flower-*girls* in Venice? I think they are so much more picturesque than men, that look as if they ought to shake down furnaces and dig up drains; but Joe says one couldn't swear at *them* for wiring the stems or giving you dirty-edged pinks, and he says he is perfectly satisfied to keep the girls under cover. Joe generally *is* satisfied with things. Of course there are a great many *times* when he lets his feelings lay round loose, but he is *usually* as serene as Lydia Pinkham. But men *ought* to be serene. All they have to do is to snap their fingers or say "Sst!" for things and *pay* for them. I know a man who has got so in the *habit* of it that he snaps his fingers at his wife as if she were a waiter and he wanted a beefsteak or a cocktail. Aint it funny? Joe says where the *funny* part comes in is when he

forgets to *fee* her; but, of course, a man doesn't want to fee his *wife*.

Do you know they are going to have another horse-car track on Temple place? Won't it be perfectly *splendid?* You know what a struggle it is *now* to get round the corner of Washington street, and what fun it is to have to *wait* there; for you meet so *many* folks you know, and now we shall *never* get round it, and it will be *just* as crowded as it is in New York, only the sidewalks won't be so wide. I *love* a crowd. Ma says she thinks it will be inconvenient about getting across. Joe says we could always cross easy enough by walking over the wagons; he says of course they will be stationary there for hours at a time. Joe is *so* silly! — he never wants *any* improvements. We went to see some *houses*, the other day, for Aunt *Smart*,—she is coming on from the *West*. She says she's had enough of "the free, wild country of the dusky braves." She's been blown out of her

house three *times*, and the dusky braves steal all her chickens, and she says if she can get into a country that *isn't* quite so *free* she'll manage to get along.

Well, we saw a *lovely* house, that had stained-glass windows, and such a *picturesque* arrangement of rooms,—*strictly* the *Queen Anne* style, the owner said; but Joe said if Queen Anne *wanted* to break her neck tumbling up such Bunker Hill stairs, and catch catarrh in such draughty hall-ways, she *could*, but Aunt *Smart* wasn't going to; and he went and got her a house with four corners and no stained glass at *all*. I was *so* mad at him I told ma about his buying twenty-seven collar-studs at different times at Music Hall entrance, for the sake of appearing *charitable* to the young ladies he had with him; for you see I am going to help Aunt Smart *furnish* the house, and I was *very* much disappointed. But I was telling you about the changes in Boston, *wasn't* I?—only Joe is the one to tell you about *those*.

He belongs to that society that digs up bones and reads gravestones, and wants to know who your great-grandmother was before she was married; the idea! And he can tell what all the old buildings are, and what's happened in them for the last hundred years. I tell him I shouldn't think he would *want* to, it makes him appear so *old* and dried up; but he says he likes to, and then he says it makes it pleasant for the old folks to be trotted out into daylight occasionally; so I never dare to eat any berries he brings home, for I know they came from some cemetery.

Did I tell you I think of going to *cooking-school* this year? The *blackberries* made me think of it, because Mrs. Groing Tuff has been putting some *up*, and *she* learned at cooking-school. She says the berries taste like squash-bugs to her and the juice like tincture of rhubarb; but they *look* well on the shelf, and it keeps her husband's relations quiet to *see* them. She says she shan't take

them *down* unless the A. B. C. F. M. quarters some people with her. She is *very* fond of appearances. She had a family group taken this summer, because she says it will look well for her grandchildren to have in the back part of their *album*. She said it was very *hard* for her, for none of the family *like* each other, and the photographer was *very* much puzzled how to get a happy expression on all their faces; but you never would *imagine* it to *look* at the picture; so it shows how smart photographers *are*, doesn't it?

But shouldn't you think they would get tired of posing people year after year with their arms resting on *pillars* and stumps of trees, or with their fingers between the leaves of a *book?* And some want to look dreamy, and some stern, and some want to have a *careless*, *happy* expression. But one can't be *too* careful about them. Joe wanted to send his photograph once to a girl that he was *dreadfully* mad at, and he wanted to look

fierce and *stern* and *reproachful;* but the man forgot to change a picnic scene in the *background*, and Joe was *taken* in it, with a basket of apples and a swing behind him. I *knew* about it, for he went away off on a journey, as *all* young men do when they are mad with girls, and he wouldn't stop to see the proofs, but confided in *me* to send her the photograph; and I didn't want to disobey him, so I *did*, and of course I couldn't forget the *time* he made about it when he came home. But he needn't have made all that fuss. The girl wasn't mad at all; she only *laughed*. Ugly, wasn't he?

PEPPERMINT.

XXII.

BOSTON, September, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Clara and I have been talking considerably lately about *matrimony*. They say girls *ought* to reflect about it seriously, and I think we *have*, for we feel as morbid and *blue* as if we'd been reading the New York *Sun*. It was Joe that first suggested our taking *notes*, and I just *wonder* he was so rash, for if we hadn't taken them we might have forgotten all about it, for Clara and I don't really *care* any more about matrimony than we do about the Caroline *Islands;* but now we've got it down in black and white what *very* peculiar and dreadfully uncomfortable things men are to live with, we *may* want to be "carrying war into distant territories," like Mrs. Farrinder, and where would Joe Perkins be *then?* At

first Clara and I didn't see *how* we were going to study up matrimony, for Maud Tuff said you can never judge of married people by the way they act when they know people are looking *on;* but she said she thought if we'd go round in sort of a *business-like* way to all the married girls in our class, and tell them it was their *duty* to give us a few points, as we were studying *human nature*, and she said she'd bet ten *cents* (that's the price of a soda, and I *never* go above it) that they'd all be glad of a reasonable excuse to "spit it out."

I didn't *believe* her, for you know there is a great deal said about cantankerous old maids liking to say spiteful things *about* men because they never get the chance to say them *to* them, and although I certainly don't call Maud an *old maid*, she *has*, as Joe *says*, a sort of "hog-on-ice" air, which makes her *very* disagreeable to *married* women; so I was very careful how I approached the subject with the first girl I called on.

I tried to be just as natural as *possible*, and never mentioned her husband till the last thing, and then I told her how it was her *duty* to Clara and me to tell us plainly; and when she found that she really *ought* to she was real *willing*, and we sent out and got some marsh-mallows and had a *real* pleasant time. She was a real *lively* girl at school, and everybody used to like her; but it seems the liveliness has been N.G. for some time, and she says she feels more like an old tomato-skin than anything else. Her husband is one of those men that are called handsome, and she says she has no doubt the girls that meet him *think* so; but she says if they had lived four years with only half an inch of mirror to *see* themselves in, on account of his always being in front of it, and if they'd gone without their lunch every other day because he forgot to send home anything but some perfumery and a scarf-pin; and if their dinner got cold and their cook got cross because he was out

promenading and didn't get in, and when he did come he went right up to the long parlor mirror to see *just* how he looked when he met the last *girl*, she says she *guesses* they would think he was as homely as a telephone pole and about as pleasant to have *round*.

And she says he squelches her as regularly as he steps on the door-mat. He sort of *patronizes* her, and when he takes her to *walk* or to the *theatre* he expects her to be as grateful as an old lady with a pinch of snuff. And he tells her she's "going off" in her looks, and why don't she dress like Miss So-and-So; and she says if she could skin out enough money between *his* suits of clothes to dress like her *second girl* she'd be *thankful*. As it is, she has turned her clothes inside out and upside down till she feels like a *whited sepulchre* all the time, and she says if she could be a *girl* again the only men she'd look at would be the ones down in Shuman's windows.

Well, then we went to see *another* girl

I knew, and she's got a *homely*, *steady* husband. She says he is so homely that she positively has to wear blue glasses *evenings*, for he is so *steady* he never goes out, and she has to sit with him *seven* evenings in the week, *four* weeks in a month, *twelve* months in the year, till she says she'd give anything to have some hysterics, only she never was *given* to them, and thinks they are silly. She says he is *good;* she *knows* he's good, and that's the worst of it. If she could just have a *suspicion* that he is a little on the bias it would make it more *exciting*, — not that she *wants* him to be, but that's the way she *feels*. She says he *despises* anything mean and dishonest, and she knows, of course, that is *beautiful;* but it is a dreadful strain on *her* to be so honest *all* the time, and never be able to tell any little white lies.

She says she is so uncomfortably moral now that if she was down to her neck in jam, or up to her knees in dust, she never

should dare to say she wasn't in to a caller, or anything like that, which doesn't hurt *anybody*, and is *so* convenient. Her husband doesn't enjoy the theatres, excepting *Shakespeare's* plays, and she says she had *really* rather go out to Forest Hills or Mount Auburn, because she can yawn all she wants to at *those* places without being impolite. And he never wants to go away to sociable places in summer, like *other* folks, but drags her way, way up in the country, where his Uncle Jotham lives, and he sees the friends of his early *youth*, and hears the bull-frogs or something horrid all summer, and she doesn't *dare* to stir out for fear of tramps and landslides; but *he* thinks it is *delightful*. And he doesn't know any of the *giddy* things that are going on, and doesn't appreciate slang, and he takes the *Scientific Monthly* and the *North American Review*, but thinks *Puck* and *Life* "wretchedly empty," although he is willing she should enjoy them if she "*can;*"

and she says, after *that* soaker she would *die* before she'd read them. She says she hears other girls complain about their husbands being away from *home* so much, and belonging to this club and that, and they envy her so much her "quiet fireside" and "domestic enjoyments;" but she says if they had played the rôle of a domestic wife as long as she has *they'd* want to kick over the family foot-lights.

Well, Clara and I promised to go in often and tell her all the *tart* things we hear of, just to keep her *spirits* up, you know; and then we went to call on a girl who I knew would cheer us *up*, because she has got one of those *popular* men for a husband that every one *likes*, and I knew *she'd* be real happy. We found her with lots of children, and only an underdone servant-girl, for she says her husband is invited *out* so much to *dinners* and *suppers* that he didn't think it was worth their while to have a cook; and she says

it is just as well, for there is nothing to cook. He has to eat so much away from home that he says it makes him sick to go to market, and she must go.

She says she'd be happy to if he'd give her plenty of money; but, being so popular, he has to spend all his money "shouting" back to people, and not even the *echo* reaches her. I asked her if it wasn't pleasant to go out with such a popular man, and she said it was as long as you *kept* out; but she said he was getting real *un*popular with *her* at home. She said it got kind of rusty to see by the papers that he had been presented at different clubs and parties with this thing and that thing as tokens of the public appreciation of his "manly, upright nature and warm heart," and then have him come home and be afraid to go down cellar to see what the cat had tipped over, and not be willing to give her enough money to buy scrubbing sand. And she said, if his shirts weren't

always ready to *cover* that warm, manly heart of his, the air was blue for an hour.

She really went on so we didn't know whether she wanted to kill *us* or *him;* but it was *evident*, as she said, that he wasn't popular at *home*. Clara and I felt sort of *small*, because we had always thought that he was perfectly *elegant*, and we thought always that she was *very* odd not to go about with him more; but we told her we would just enjoy *snubbing* him after this, and she was very grateful, and said that every little *helps*. You can imagine that Clara Smart and I were *very* excited by this time.

We had had no idea that matrimony was so complicated, and we wondered *what* kind of a head-of-the-family we should strike next, and we found an *airy* one. He is *so* airy and *so* particular that his wife feels as if she ought to live out on the water-spout or on the door-scraper; and she says she never sees an old, high-stepping rooster but it

reminds her of her husband. She says when she married him he was a very *comfortable*, *common* sort of a man; but he happened to make some money on stocks (she says she don't see how he was ever *bright* enough to), and since then nothing has been *good* enough for him,—*his* family, or *her* family, or his house or servants, or what he has to eat; and she never *pretends* to go about with him, for he says she doesn't dress in *any* taste, and he tells her he married beneath him; and she has been considered an encumbrance so *long* she says she's real *glad* to talk about it; and she said she could tell us lots of things more if it would *help* us any in our notes; and she said she *knew* the girl next *house* would like to, for she had what is called an *ugly* husband.

But we felt a little delicate about calling on *her*,—it seemed sort of like *reporters*, and as if we were preparing an article for a New York Sunday paper; but she said she wouldn't

mind, for she said wives were getting all over their reticence now; it was getting *old-fashioned* and *passé* to keep things back about your husbands, and she found the more she talked the better she *felt*. But Clara and I felt sort of depressed, and thought we wouldn't hear any more for the present. We seemed to have a *general insight* into it, and that was all we wanted. But would you *think*, Poesie, dear, to *look* at them, that they would act so?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXIII.

BOSTON, October, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Of course, after the painful disclosures of last week, Clara and I felt *very* dismal; but I told her we might as well be *cheerful*, — we are too *young* to marry yet, and by the time we get ready perhaps women will "have the ballot." I don't just know what that *means*, and I don't see how it's going to make men's *dispositions* any better; but it must be going to do *something*, or women wouldn't fuss so to have it; and of course if *they* have it, Clara and *I* will, so it will be all right. And I asked Clara if we hadn't better go on with the mournful business, and see the woman with the *ugly* husband; and she said she would, and we went.

She was very *scared* looking, and we all

went into the parlor as if we'd hooked something. She said he didn't like to have her use the *parlor* very well; and we asked her what room he *did* like to have her use, and she said, well, there wasn't *any;* if she used many rooms in *winter*, he said she was burning up the whole coal region; and if she used them in *summer*, he said the flies ruined the furniture and pictures; and then, again, if she *didn't* use them when company was there, he said she was trying to make him appear *mean;* and so she said she generally went round like a hen with her head off.

We asked her if she didn't get *used* to his ways; and she said she often *thought* she did; but she thinks he doesn't *care* to have her get used to them, but likes to *surprise* her in various little ways.

She never believed in fairy stories till she was married, but *now* she believes all about Blue Beard and the man who tickled his wife's feet till she died; and she thinks if

they'd get up a new edition of them, and not illustrate the girls with curtain-muslin Turkish trousers on, and long, flowing robes, but dress them in every-day Boston clothes, with all the hair they've got left done up *systematically*, she thinks the stories would be more generally *understood*, and appeal to the female public sympathies more. Not that such women as she dress very modern, because she says she'd rather scrub up *depots* for money than ask *him* for any; and she says when the monthly bills come in he acts like a bull in a china shop. And yet if she doesn't *dress* well, and have the *house* look well, he says she is trying to save up the money he gives her for illegitimate purposes, such as giving it to her relatives or buying fashion-papers.

As for the matter of eating, she thinks that he wants her, in an unobtrusive *way*, to emulate Dr. Tanner, although he has never said it right *out*. She says *occasionally* he gives her as much as 62½ cents to get a dinner with

when *he* is going to be at home, and then, if she doesn't have a roast and all the accompaniments, and enough for a temperance *convention*, she doesn't see any more money for *weeks*. She hasn't hardly any *friends*, because she says he thinks her friends are trying to set her against him; and he hasn't *got* any, because he sits down on them so much they never have a chance to get *up*. And she says any one is afraid to come to see her if they value their life any. They kind of stand off, and tell her to brace up, and not mind him; but they don't seem to set her much of an *example*, for she says they run like cats when they *hear* or *see* him. She does not think it would do for her to brace up much till she is ready to *die*, for *he* wants to do all the fighting, and if *she* should get a liking for it she should have to look out for cold lead.

We asked her if her *children* weren't any comfort; but she said they couldn't be. She

couldn't make them *respect* him, and he was mad at them because they *didn't*, and it made them sort of mean, weak-spirited children, that didn't dare to say their souls were their own; and *she* kept discovering little traits in them like their father, and *he* kept calling them just like *her*, and between them *both* the children are turning out real little bully-raggers.

Sometimes she thinks she will be real *pleasant*, and work the "soft-answer" racket; but he calls her a fool if she does, and if she looks severe as she *feels*, he says she is *sour;* so she cultivates an *empty* expression, that might do for a hen or a cow. She doesn't think there is much pleasure this side of the crematory for her; but we told her she ought to have more *spirit.* I asked *Clara* if she oughtn't to, and she said she guessed *she'd* never let a man trample on her in that way.

But just then we heard him slam the door

to his carriage. It was an *awfully* hard slam, and of course made us jump, and we asked her if we hadn't better go out some back *way*, and she said if we didn't mind getting out of the piazza window and dropping down a few feet, she thought it *would* perhaps be better; so, although Clara and I had on some brand-new undressed kids and our best clothes, we did so, and I am happy to *say* got out without his *seeing* us. You see we should not have *done* it if he hadn't have slammed his door so. We should have met and faced him with a *haughty*, *disapproving* look, to let him know we did not like his treatment of his wife at all; but he made us kind of *nervous*, you see. But isn't it perfectly *dreadful* to have men so hypocritical?

Would you *believe*, when they call so politely and gracefully, and won't even let you take their *hat* from them or turn up the *gas*, that they'd let you balance bags and trunks and things round on your hips and your stomach

all the rest of your life — that is, if they rope you in? And *do* you suppose it is possible that these fellows, that always get orchestra chairs for the theatre and want you to eat lots *afterwards*, and want to knock the leading man on the stage out in one round because he happens to look at your *hat-pins*, while he's squeezing the heroine and can't look at *her* for fear her hair-net will catch in his *mustache*, and wants to catch every draught and put it right *out* before it blows on you, and calls on you next evening to see if the play didn't *excite* you or *bore* you too much, — does it seem *possible* that they will want you to eat salt-fish for luncheon all the rest of your *life*, and go to unpopular plays and sit in the seats where the play seems nothing but a *pantomime*, and let you tear your arms out of their sockets and the linings out of your sleeves hoisting your cloak on for yourself, while they are half way down to the sidewalk, and will let you cough all night and not *care* a darn?

Just *think* how perfectly *lovely* they all talk about your being so sweet, and how they'll just *look* at you when they put your cloak on or button your gloves for you, and they'll walk home six or seven blocks for the sake of walking *one* block with *you*, or take the very *last* train out so as to *stay* a little longer; and they remember what kind of *candy* you like and what kind of *books*, and whether you like much *salt* or *sugar*, and the *exact* remarks you made on certain occasions, and whether you like *blond* or *dark* young men, or the beach or country best, or dogs or cats, and all of those little things which are so *comforting* and interesting to have them know.

And then afterwards to *think* that they call you an old cat and a frump, and shiftless and dowdy, and never bring you any taffy of *any* description, and don't remember *anything* you tell them, and can't catch the last train home *to* you at all; and if any leading man looks at you, *then* tell you they wished he'd run off

with you and never bring you back. Isn't it *dreadful*, and do you *wonder* that women run off with their coachmen, and get fond of Skye-terriers and pugs and white mice and canaries, and take more stock in the fashions than in the *Lord*, and like to giggle when men fall *down* or women get the *best* of them? But, at the same *time*, Poesie, dear, it would be kind of dull *without* men, *wouldn't* it, and if they were all so *dreadfully* good it *would* be hard to keep *up* with them, wouldn't it? Do you believe it all, *anyway*, Poesie, dear?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXIV.

BOSTON, October, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Don't you think there are times when everything seems *very* monotonous? *I* do. I feel as if I'd like to be put on another route, same as they do horse-car horses. I don't see *why* I feel so. Joe says it's because I can't make up my mind about my winter clothes; but Joe hasn't any *sentiment*. I'm sure you read lots of *poetry* every fall about things being so dull; leaves drying all up and falling off; and I don't think it's at *all* pleasant to be compared to them. *Shouldn't* you think newspaper men would get *fearfully* tired of having so much poetry sent them about "Spring," and "Autumn," and "Summer," and "Winter"? And it's always about the same *thing*, and I suppose every one thinks theirs is the *nicest*,

and wants it in *first*, and the editors have to be so *polite*, and get every one in, or else they'll be mad. And in the spring they all write about brooks and birds, and how lovely everything is; just as if they didn't know that in the *fall* they would turn right round and write the other way about our all decaying or doing something disagreeable.

But I don't see how they make such rhymes; it must be awfully *hard*. Don't you remember we used to try to? And *do* you suppose, when they write these solemn things that read off so smooth and easy, that they chew up the end of the pen, and get the ink on their tongue, and make little things all over their paper while they are trying to find a *rhyme?* I've often wondered about it, and I should think it would be horrid for them if they were writing about their wife's dying, or something else dreadful, to hustle round so for a rhyme; and then nobody *reads* it after all their trouble. *I* never read poetry, do *you?* —

that *is*, only those funny little "Gazettings." I think they are a great deal nicer than "Paradise Lost," or any of those old things that some people think are so *beautiful*. I know a lady who says her greatest hope in *life* is to find time *some* day to read all of Shakespeare's works. Did you ever *hear* of anything so queer? Just imagine looking forward all your life to such a doleful thing as *that*.

Are you reading "The Bostonians," and *don't* you suppose Verena is going to marry that long-legged Ransom who was always trying to argue and give his opinions before any one has asked for them? I don't think a fellow who couldn't support himself any better than he did ought to *have* so many opinions, do you? If he *does* marry Verena I hope she'll turn out just like her mother, and go flopping round. I *do* wish writers would be more careful, and get heroes and heroines that didn't remind you of disagreeable people. Ronald, in "White Heather," makes me think

of our ash-man; and to think of that *lovely* Meenie travelling round with *him* is just *detestable*. But I was telling you how monotonous I feel, wasn't I? Of course, what Joe says about it being my winter clothes making me feel so isn't *so*, but they *do* bother me a great deal. *Would* you have one of these capes that make you look all frumpled *up*; or would you have one of these jackets that make you look all smoothed *down*, and would you wear a hat or a bonnet?

Joe says if a girl wears a *hat* she looks as smart as a *rooster*, and if she wears a bonnet she looks tame as a *hen;* and I do think, of all mean-looking things a hen is the *meanest*, and they act the meanest,—don't they? Joe says it's a libel on hens to say they can act any meaner than *women* do crossing a street; and he says the way they scuttle round the corner in front of the old court-house, on Temple place *now*, is enough to burst the suspenders in the opposite window. For any

one that seems to *dislike* women as Joe does, he *watches* them the most. I believe he can tell whether every girl he *meets* has got on a single or a double-mesh hair-net, and he can *always* tell if they've got pivot *teeth*. But I mustn't forget how doleful I feel. Why, even ice-cream soda doesn't seem to raise my spirits. Joe carefully reads over the *syrups* to me, — strawberry, vanilla, lemon, pine-apple, orange, lime-juice, nectarine, raspberry, Roman punch; but they fail to arouse *any* enthusiasm in me, and Joe says I passed four comparatively *swell* fellows, the other day, without fixing my veil at *all;* so you see he notices how melancholy and indifferent I am, and I asked him what he thought it was, and what I could do to arouse myself, and he says it's my *liver* he thinks, instead of the falling autumn leaves, and he thinks a little *picra* would *arouse* me.

I don't know what that *is*, but I am sure

it must be awfully nasty, or *Joe* wouldn't recommend it; he *never* recommends anything *pleasant.* I think I ought to *travel*, don't *you*, Poesie, dear? That is what they do here when they get tired; but Joe and ma say they guess they'll leave that fashion to the bank cashiers, and if I travel round Boston and vicinity they think I shall recover my spirits in time. I think it must be lovely to travel abroad, and talk about an ocean steamer as if it was Chelsea ferry, and turn up your nose at Boston shops; not that I think you *ought* to turn up your nose at them, but it is *so stylish.* They've got such *lots* of goods this year, and they are all so pretty until you see them on some horrid thing you don't *like*, and then you would like to make *dusters* of them. That other Perkins girl is in Boston, and she keeps coming up like a *pill*, and *disgusting* me. I can't even buy a spotted veil or a *collar* stud but she gets one just *like* it; probably she don't know that

I've got them, but I should think her *instinct* would tell her; *mine* would.

I kept meeting her downtown, the other day; but I pretended I didn't *see* her till *she* was over in front of Shreve's, and *I* was in front of Bradbury's, and I knew she could *never* get *over* to me, and I looked back and said, "How d'ye do?" for I wouldn't *ask* her to come and see me, and she is so frigidly polite I knew she'd ask *me;* and if you are not *just* as polite always as *any one* it makes you feel as mean as — as — *oatmeal.* I can't think of anything meaner than *that*, or *blanc-mange*, we'll say, — and, come to *think* of it, that Perkins girl makes me think of both of them. Some girls you know make you think of peaches and big apples and nice things like *that;* but *don't* you ever meet people that make *you* think of old water crackers and dried-up biscuit?

Don't you remember that young man that used to call on you who always made you feel

as if you had been eating *alum?* You said he looked so puckered up, and his conversation so *dry*, and he used to stay and stay till it got to something like a nightmare; but that is *always* the way, — the fellows that are real *agreeable* and *crispy* skip right in and out like *lamp-lighters*, but the stupid ones, that never read the papers, or see plays, or *hear* anything, will expect you to burn gas and make conversation till you feel as if you were glued to the *chair*, and it begins to seem such an *awfully* long time since you got up in the morning.

Joe says what they *talk* about is no indication of what they *are*, or how they *feel;* for he says he met one of my tame young men coming down the street, the other night, from a call on me, and he was swearing like an *iceman*. And he says the men who talk the largest in the horse-car about the "Roumelian situation" and the "political outlook" don't know Roumelia from Skowhegan, or the political out-

look from Miss Parloa's recipes. I suppose they never give *him* a chance to talk is the reason he feels so snarly about them. Isn't it funny to hear any one talk in a horse-car? They know every one is listening, and they want to talk *so* polite, and only allude to the *superior* parts of their life.

I never heard a girl tell another one in a horse-car that the facing was all torn off the bottom of her *dress*, or her bustle ought to be passed in to the *ragman*, or that she was going to piece down her silk skirt with lasting, or cut up her mother's muff to trim her jacket with; but they'll tell all the concerts they've been to and all the books they've read, and all the elegant little remarks they can *think* of to make, and you get *mad* at them, but you go and do just the same *yourself*. But I haven't told you *half* I meant to about being so melancholy, and I wanted you to write ma that you think I ought to *travel;* and *would* you have a mantle or a jacket? — be *sure* and tell

me. Of course, I shall be governed a *great deal* by that other Perkins girl, though *supposing* she should go to work and have *both*. I think autumn is a horrid season anyway, don't you?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXV.

BOSTON, October, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

So *many* of the girls are getting married just now, and I almost wish I had thought about it. It must be so stylish and *pleasant* to have a flat, and furnish it all up in the latest carpets and papers and chairs and things, and then sit round in it in your new clothes and be elegant. Susie Green has got such a *lovely* one! The paper on her rooms makes you think of some of those lovely plays you see, where the people all walk round in red and yellow satins, and there don't seem to be any expense spared. And the wood-work in her rooms is in different shades, and there are shelves built into her mantel, and stained glass into her windows, and lovely electric bells and lights, and nothing at all *common*.

She says the provision has got to come in the front *door*, and the washing has got to be done on the *roof*, and the walls are so thin you can hear your neighbors *sneeze*. But I shouldn't think she need mind those little things, should you, when everything else is so gorgeous? Susie is going to be married, you know. She has got some *lovely* things, — only brides all have things *alike*. I know seven girls that are going to be married, and they have each got a *brown* dress and a *black* dress, and a *red* or a *blue* wrapper. You know girls that are light and pasty all think they must have *blue*, and look still *more* swishy; and girls that are dark and just *tearing*-looking, always get red, and look like fire-engines all trimmed up with lace; and they all want lace curtains and red mahogany in their *chambers*, and blue and gold, or red and gold, in their *parlors;* and they all want some birds and a fernery, or some plants; and they all set up a work-basket and a stocking-bag, and a

string-bag and a duster-bag, and a slipper-bag and a rag-bag, and they have all got a bunch of roses, or a Kensington outline on them.

Isn't it funny they have them just alike? But Joe says it's a good thing for them to have them and get used to, for a few *days* even, for they'll never see them again. He is one of those men that is always telling those silly things about there being buttons off their clothes and holes in their *stockings*, and he pretends *he* can sew buttons on best; and the way he does is to brace the needle against the *door*, and then pushes the cloth *on to* it; and he always runs his thumb on to it *with* the cloth, and then he *swears* and drops it, and ma sews it on, and he thinks *he* did it. Humph! And he is always talking about *women* stopping on the *street* and blocking the sidewalks.

Why, the other day *I* walked from State street to School street on a *man's* heels that

wouldn't get out of the way, and I was bumped in the eye, and banged in the back, and trod on, and — *expectorated* on, Poesie, dear, till I felt like a *cigar-stump*. And then to have them talk so about their "business hours," and "offices," and "the wear and tear of a man's life," just as if they didn't spend half their time reading the bulletin-boards and taking drinks and *gossiping*. The idea!

Why, Joe Perkins will bring, all the year round, I believe, more gossip in one day from down town than ma and I could collect in a *month*, and he is so *mysterious* about it. He will sit down at the table and sort of smile to himself and his napkin-ring, and then he'll say, "You know John Thomas?" or, "You remember that Jones girl that we used to think was so *nice?*" and ma and I say, "Yes;" and then he *sits* there, after that exciting question, and eats his soup, and then he wipes his mouth and settles back in his chair, and ma and I are perfectly *breathless* with *suspense*, and then

he'll say, "Well, I heard to-day" — and then he'll eat two or three mouthfuls, and ma and I nearly *choke;* and finally, after we are perfectly *exhausted,* he manages to grind out his story, and sometimes, if we don't seem quite eager enough to *suit* him, he will conclude that he ought not to tell us, — it's a secret. Just as if *men* ever kept anything a secret! One day ma and I thought we'd pretend we did not *care* about his old story, and when he kept *quiet* so long we commenced talking about something else, and you never *saw* a man so uneasy. When he said, "Well, I heard to-day," ma and I never asked him *what* he heard nor anything, and he finally jumped up and bounced out, making a remark about the "indifference of women to everything but the fashions;" and we found out *afterward* that all he wanted to tell us was that Jennie Hobbs's husband paid five hundred dollars a *year* for her bonnets!

And then men tell us that *we* are always

gossiping, and pretend *they* are above it, and all the time they are just *thirsting* to tell things *before* we do, — that's all the difference. But I was talking about matrimony and the bags for different things, wasn't I? It is so strange that girls have everything alike so. No matter how *original* and *independent* girls are *before* they get married, when *that* stirring event comes off they are all just alike, and they all say just about the same things. They are going to make things so *pleasant* and *homelike*, and they must all have little white aprons, and are going to stay in a great deal and sew, and shall not go *shopping* so much or to *matinées*, and are going to be *beautiful* house-keepers and do everything that "George" or "Harry" or "Tom" wants; but, of course, they shall not lose their *identity* or be *trampled* on, and they don't think "George" or "Harry" or "Tom" would *want* them to be; and then they all have one precise bonnet that makes them look real *aged* and *experienced*, and some sort

of a garment that looks *severe;* and I *never* knew a girl to have them on more than once or twice, for pretty soon I notice they all commence to be *smart*, and say they guess they won't dress like their *grandmother*, and sit in the house and *sew* all day and never see anybody. And you commence to meet them on Temple place and Winter street and at *matinées*, and they look as grateful and pleased to be there as if they had just returned from *abroad*, or been snatched from the *grave*, as the ministers say, and after that they don't have any more eccentric ideas, but just toddle through life comfortably, same as *all* girls do; and Joe says there is a grand finale to all the bags but the rag-bag.

But isn't it funny for them to all have the same thoughts? They most always have the same presents, too. A girl always has a marble clock, *doesn't* she, and a Rogers *group*, and a pair of bronze vases? And she almost always has a lace handkerchief *somewhere* in

the lot; at any rate, there are lots of things you give sort of a familiar nod to when you see them among the gifts. But I believe it isn't *stylish* and *correct* now to show the presents, and I should think it would be a *great* convenience; for, supposing a girl didn't *have* any, how nice it would be not to have to show them! I mean not to have to show that she didn't *have* any; but it makes it kind of hard for the girls that have *cart-loads* of them.

It must be lovely to have such lots of things given you, the same as I should think it would be nice to have one of those "pound parties" you see advertised in the papers; but mustn't it be horrid to have those you just hate give you a lovely present just because you *invited* them, and you have to stick it up *somewhere*, for you never know when they'll call?

Mrs. Groing Tuff said she had a mirror fixed when *she* was a young, anxious bride

so she could command the front door-steps, and as her door servant was *very* moderate she could see who was on them, and she'd just whisk out the present they'd given her, and stick it right under their *eyes* somewhere. She says there was no *harm* in it, and it made things pleasant for *them;* only she says when there were several called at *once* she'd come near breaking her neck. But she is very composed in her manner, Mrs. Groing Tuff is. Why, I've known her to be upstairs with her human-hair bang up in *papers*, and her bustle off *mending* it, and cold cream all over her *face*, and callers would come, and in ten minutes she'd be down with them as calm as a plumber, and acting as easily as if she'd just been reading poetry or practising on a mandolin.

I've had to look way back at the commencement of my letter to see what I started on, and *do* you find any difficulty in following my letters? Joe says *he'd* as soon try to

follow a herdic-driver; but I always feel that *you* understand me, and although I can't just think *now* what idea it *was* I started to express to you, I know that *you* know what it is. It is so nice to write you *freely* all of my most important and truly *deepest* thoughts.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXVI.

BOSTON, October, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Joe was mean enough to tell ma that if I wanted to go to the symphony concerts this year he should think she would make me get my tickets *myself*. He said this giving a girl twelve or fifteen dollars to go and giggle and catch cold for twenty-four evenings was one of the things that made the position of head of the family undesirable. He says the position is *getting* to be *very* unpopular now, and girls better be careful, or there'll be a strike. He influenced ma so that she finally said she guessed I *could* get my tickets myself; that is, you know, just *deny* myself lots of things to make up for it. It was a great *shock* to me, for I never thought ma was so *mercenary*. She never said any of those horrid

things to me *before* about learning the value of *money*, and "A penny saved is a penny *earned*," and "Look out for the pence and the pounds will look out for *themselves*."

I have *known* girls whose folks make their lives constantly *unpleasant* by such little allusions as those, and are always telling them that what they spend on gloves and boots would *clothe* some poor family; and what is the girl going to do *without* boots and gloves, I'd like to know? She'd be a poor family herself, I guess. But, as I tell you, Poesie, dear, I *never* had such dismal things said to me before, until Joe stirred ma up. I was determined to *go* to the concerts, for I am *very* fond of music, in spite of Joe's disagreeable remarks; and he don't know the Oberon overture from the Turkish Patrol, or he would not *make* them. So I asked Clara what she thought, and she said I might try and do some *bargaining*, and so save enough on my shopping to get my ticket. She said

her ticket would be all secure, because her pa was always willing to give her money for elevating objects; and, although he never has been to hear any of the concerts, he knows by the name of them that they *must* be elevating, and she never has any trouble with him.

I thought Clara was very kind, considering *she* was so well fixed, to offer to *help* me; but then, you know, she *wanted* to get her seat next to *mine*, because (don't you ever *breathe* this, Poesie Plympton, as you hope to keep your own hair till you *die!*) Joe always comes and goes *home* with us. I asked him if he didn't think he ought to pay *half* toward my ticket for the sake of my allowing him to come and see all the *girls*, and have the pleasure of bowing to them; but he just *looked* at me as much as to say we ought all to pay him something for *coming;* and when men get into *that* deluded state that they think the whole race

of Eve is in *love* with them, you might as well try to handle a cream-cake. But he said he would advance me some money, and I might pay him in *instalments*, like people pay for *furniture*, only I should *hope* Joe Perkins wouldn't be so business-like as to swoop down on me and demand my ticket if I didn't pay up my instalments regularly.

Anyway I've got my *ticket;* but you've no idea what your Peppermint is suffering to pay for the old thing. If Joe would only be real *quiet* and *easy* about it it wouldn't be so *unpleasant;* but if he sees me in Huyler's or Miss Fiske's, or looking in Toppan's or Crawley's window, he looks at me as if I was one of those old absconding fiends up in Montreal, and makes some of those dreadfully depressing and economical remarks that I alluded to in the first of my letter, so that life is *getting* to be a burden. You see the worst of it is the heavy *brain*-work I have to do over my clothes. At first I concluded I could save

considerable on my boots and shoes; but very *unfortunately* I stopped to look in Tuttle's window, and there were some *lovely* shoes there, and I concluded I wouldn't save on *those*, but could save on my *gloves;* and then I went up to Miss Fiske's, and when I saw the lovely shades in *gloves*, I just told Clara that I'd wear my tennis cap all winter and my gossamer *water-proof*, but I *must* have enough kid gloves.

So you see there was nothing for me to do but to save on my *millinery* and *dress-making;* so I thought I'd do as ma does, and collect samples, and plan and calculate, and soak the samples and iron them, and turn them, and let them stay in the sun, and make myself perfectly *miserable* over them in all *sorts* of ways. So when I saw some goods that I *liked* I asked the clerk for a sample. He was one of these elegant affairs, and if you'd met him out on *horseback*, or anywhere at a *distance*, you'd thought he was just a howling *swell*, and he

looked just like these swell old gods you see round in mythologies and museums; and when he said, "'Twill be all gone by mornin', mum," I was as *disappointed* — not about the goods being *gone*, I knew they *wouldn't* be, for I know what old Ananiases these clerks *are*, but I was so sorry not to have him live up to his *figure;* of course, he couldn't be *very* godlike and haughty cutting off samples, but he needn't have said "*mum*," and scratched his ear with the pin he put in my *samples;* and Clara and I concluded that if he would only keep his *mouth* shut and clean his *finger-nails* he'd do to fall in *love* with. You've no idea how *comforting* and *entertaining* it is to keep falling in love with some one; it doesn't hurt *them* any, they never *know* it, and it keeps you interested all the time. Clara and I were *very* much pleased last year with an organ-grinder. We thought he must look like Marc Antony; but Joe said if he heard "Sweet By and By" and "Silver Threads

among the Gold" any more under the windows he'd set the monkey on me, and Clara and I had to *transfer* our affections.

But I was telling you about the shopping. Clara and I took *turns* in asking for samples, because I told her it was of no use our both getting ourselves disliked for the season for *nothing*, and in that way we collected quite a *lot;* but we thirsted for blood before we *got* them. Some of the clerks were real nice, and cut us great junks, and asked us if we didn't want some more, and pinned them all on and marked them, and were so perfectly *lovely* that Joe says he should think I'd carry my birthday book down for them to write in. But once in a *while* we found refractory ones; they would pretend they didn't *hear*, and then they'd meet us with a stony *glare*, and then walk way off and talk to another clerk, and finally, when they saw us looking so mild but *determined*, they'd walk slowly back and give the goods round them little *yanks* and *pulls* as if they

wished they were our *ears* or *noses*, and then they'd say "Which d'yer want?" and cut us just a little *snip*, and toss it to us just as a man hands his wife *money*, and then *hum* something. Some of the clerks looked so scornful and superior that you felt as if they must be Harvard students on a vacation, and one of them actually *awed* Clara so that she never dared to ask the width of the goods at *all*, and she confided to me in the next aisle that if it were a choice between her standing on her head on a show-case and asking him for a *sample* she'd do the *former;* and that was a good deal for a *Runover* girl to say.

When a Runover girl even *suggests* standing on her head you feel that she means *business*. I've no doubt this clerk would have *given* us samples, — he was too mournfully polite *not* to, — but you would have felt as *mean* about it as if you'd asked him to give you a lock of his hair. His clothes fitted so *very* tight, and his collar, and his beard was trimmed so *close*. I

don't believe there was *anything* loose about him but his morals; and I don't really *see* how such stylish young men can be coaxed to tend store; but I suppose they must sell their goods *some way*, and he answered just as well for an advertisement as the old corn and bunion man with the placard on.

But between Clara and I we secured enough samples, but after I got them I didn't know what to *do* with them; they made my purse stick out, and I kept pulling them out with my *change*, and they got all *mixed* up so I didn't know the *all*-wool and a yard wide ones from the others; but ma always knows, and if I could just keep her as close as a juryman from *Joe* she would help me. But *do* you see how I can enjoy the concerts with so much on my mind? And Joe is contemptible enough to ask me how I *like* it, and if I'd like to be the head of a family, and have the entire responsibility for the payment of *five* or *six* feminine wardrobes on my hands, and go round myself with a *passé*

overcoat and no fun; but I tell him I don't believe there is a man in the *world* that don't have fun. They may *look* awfully worn-out and as dried up as a sugar cooky, but I guess they always look out for their little *amusements;* and I don't believe in *all Music Hall* there is a man more perplexed than *I* am. Do you, Poesie, dear?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXVII.

BOSTON, October, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

My feelings are considerably more *relieved* than when I wrote you last, because I have paid almost my last *instalment* on that old Symphony ticket. Joe says he is very lenient with me; but I don't *see* it. He says money was not his object in the transaction, but an honest desire to improve and elevate the female sex. And he said if I would solemnly *promise* not to buy any *wrap* trimmed with *feather trimming* during the entire *winter*, or be inveigled into *borrowing* and *wearing* such a wrap, or suggest or hint in any way, shape, or manner my *desire* for such a wrap, he would consider it well worth all the money I might ask him for during the next year.

Of course that is a very good offer *seem-*

ingly, and it shows that Joe has very deep feelings against feather-trimmed capes. But consider the *sacrifice*, my dear Poesie! Why, there is actually *nobody*, from our cook's daughter *up*, but has got one, and your Peppermint has got to look on in *envy*. And yet Joe thinks he is very lenient. I haven't decided *yet*. Joe says he'll leave it open until the first of January; for he thinks by that time the *feathers* will all be exhausted, if the *women* are not, and he may be able to save me. I presume I shall have to *accept* his offer, because I don't exactly see any other way to pay him. I didn't save quite so much on my clothes as I *expected*, though I made an endeavor which was truly praiseworthy, Joe said, and sufficient to hand my name down to posterity with those of women who have fought Indians and stabbed princes and interviewed governors. I tried to make me a winter suit.

Of course if I had known all the quantity

I was going to *use*, I should have known I couldn't have saved much on it; but who would suppose that there were so many mean little tricks about making a dress that one don't *think* of? You needn't ever *mention* it, Poesie, dear, because there is no *necessity* for it; but I used eighteen yards of double-width goods to make me just a skirt and waist. You see I kept cutting things upside *down* and wrong side *out*, and had to get new goods to cut new ones *out* of; and then the fronts of the basque kept skewing up, and I kept on, thinking that if I cut new ones it would be all right. But the buttons would persist in buttoning wrong, and went off toward my left ear; and I kept getting the *sleeves* in wrong, and first I got them big enough for the fat woman, and then I took them in so much they wouldn't have done for the skeleton man, and the seams all looked hobbly, like bean-pods.

I think it was the fault of the *sewing-silk*. I bought it of an awful hateful girl, — one of

those slim, slender things that look as if they could slide right up the *cash-tubes;* and she was so busy fixing her bangles and trying to see through the back of a young man's head that was in front of the store, that I don't believe she had her mind on the silk at *all.* And then I couldn't get the skirts right at all; first they festooned up in front, and, as soon as I got the *front* right, the *back* swung way up a foot or two from the ground; and I sewed my fingers up, and run the needle under my thumb-nail, and nothing that I sewed caught at *all,* excepting into my *knees;* and finally I told Clara I guessed I'd make the whole thing into holders and shoe-bags, and get something else and have a *dress-maker* make it, and I'd save something *else,* — only I'd kept on so from one thing to *another* that there was nothing left to save *on;* and I was very glad that Joe made me that offer, for I've got it to fall *back* on, only it gives me such a sad feeling

to see all the feather trimming lying around and swinging out of door-ways, and all the "Prices to Suit" signs, and feel that I can't *have* any.

I'd like to know what's the fun of my *going* to the Symphony Concerts if I don't have anything to wear? Of *course* I shall sneeze, and then Joe Perkins will have to make his foolish remarks. He pretends to say that the minute a good-looking man puts his head in at one of the doors there, it's just as if a photographer had said, "Look this way, madam!" to all the women in the hall; and it's no such *thing*, — it's because they don't take any more notice of him than of Beethoven's statue that he *says* so.

But there is a great *difference* in people that go to concerts, you know. Some girls come in, — these *drawn-out*-looking girls, that look like Du Maurier's pictures, and make you think of these long jube-jube paste-sticks, — and they will come in as if it was

kind of a memorial service and they were related to the mourners, and they will sort of glide down to their seat and melt into it, and after a few seconds, which looks as if they were asking a blessing, they keep their eyes fixed on the programme, and don't raise them at all except to the orchestra.

I believe if two or three people should fall over the *balcony*, or every string in the orchestra *broke*, they'd just *sit* there as if they were afraid their hair would come down if they moved. Then there *are* girls that come in and raise a breeze; the doors slam after them, and they make *such* a draught, and sit down on their seats so hard they actually *bounce*, and they act natural and look round as if that's what they *came* for; and then, after they've found out who is *there* and what everybody has got *on*, they listen to the music and enjoy it ever so much, and they seem so much more comfortable to look at than the other ones.

But I *do* wish people would be more particular about their back hair. Of course, it gives you something to *look* at, and, as Joe says, keeps up your connection with the earth; but when it looks as if you wanted to run a glue-brush round it, or tie it up in a hard knot, it takes your mind off the concert altogether *too* much. And then those little curls on the back of the neck are so *uncertain*. Some of them look like pretzels, and some like monkey-skin fur, they hang down so straight; but the girls seem to think if their front hair is all right it's no matter about the back. But they can't feel as sensitive as *I* do, for sometimes, when I sit in front of people I know, I just *feel* that they are picking me to pieces; and if they are *very* hateful people I *always* look at my back hair when I get *home*.

Some people that sit behind one always talk up real loud and *fair*, and make you feel comfortable; but when they are people

that get to whispering and giggling, it makes you feel kind of stiff and chilly all over and wish you hadn't *come;* for what do you care for "just valuation of melodic figures, proper emphasis, well-managed dynamic gradations of force, elasticity, and animation," if your back hair is coming down?

I do *envy* the girls so that have short hair! Just think how they can skip downstairs in the morning, and they don't have to worry all the time about fires and burglars. I am always afraid there will be a fire, or some burglars to chase me out into public with my hair up in papers and my cold-cream gloves on. You can smile if you *want* to, but just *think* of it! I always like the paper that comes on dry-goods' parcels to do my hair up in, and Joe says I look like a pop-corn ball; which means, I *suppose*, that my hair is the color of molasses candy; but I don't seem to care for Joe's remarks now. All he does is to walk round town daytimes

and *watch* the girls, and go to see them evenings and *twit* them, and I should *think* his life would be about as dull as an elevator boy's.

Would you be an elevator boy, and keep calling out, "Shawls, underwear, millinery, upholstery, furniture," all day long, and have lots of women step on you, and try to crowd on before you want them, and get mad if they can't sit down, and keep saying the elevator isn't as nice as it is in some other store, and keep asking you if it is safe, and if the inspectors have seen it? But I should always want to keep on the right side of an elevator boy, for just *supposing* he should get mad and keep you between two floors, or else keep running you up and down and not letting you stop, while some other girl was walking off with all the feather trimming at $1.38 a yard; wouldn't it be a dreadful thing? You see how depressed and morbid I am *getting*.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXVIII.

BOSTON, November, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I have been *very* busy cleaning house, or, at least, superintending it, to help ma; for there are so many frivolous girls nowadays, who, as Joe says, don't know a waffle-iron from hair-tongs, that I am determined to get a "clearer insight into practical things," as it always says in Young Ladies' Companions, and have some *character*. Joe says he thinks if I'd let ma write me out one, and be satisfied with *that*, it would save a good deal of expense and family feelings; or he said while I was trying to get up a little character he would go off somewhere gunning; but he said as for being round home when I was trying to elevate myself, he *won't*. He thinks he's dreadfully funny, I suppose; sometimes

he tries to be so funny I think he's got softening of the *brain*, for anybody who knows *anything* can see that there isn't a *bit* of sense in what he says.

One would naturally *suppose* that he would be anxious to have his only sister *improve* herself; but he don't take the least *interest*. Why, last year I got him to give me lessons in German, and I offered to keep all his *buttons* sewed on if he would teach me; and he gave me three lessons, and then offered me *anything* I'd *like* if I'd give it up. He said it was far better that his clothes should be a total wreck than that *he* should. Peculiar, isn't he? But, notwithstanding Joe's inferences, I shall *continue* to improve, Poesie, dear, just as long as there is *room* for it.

Does your ma ever have sort of *reserved* spells towards you, when she sort of infers that you might amuse yourself a little less at her expense, and darn your own stockings *more;* and you feel as if you had rather go

out of the *back door* to the *matinée*, instead of passing by *her* door? Well, ma often has them, and suggests the most *dreadful* things for me to do, such as gathering my own skirts into the bindings, or to face something *crossway*, or to hunt for moths in the carpets. But she soon gets over her spells, and is as polite as *ever* to me.

I think in house-cleaning times she seems more in *earnest* about them than at any other time, and whenever I hear her ordering pumice-stone and varnish I generally give up buying *matinée* tickets, and make it a point to ask her seven or eight times a *day* if I can't *help* her. Heretofore she has always said, "No, you can't;" and then I could go and sit down with my conscience quite *easy*. But very unexpectedly, the other day, she said I *could* help her. I could look over the store-room upstairs for her, and arrange things in *boxes* in order, and help her ever so much; for she said she had picked up that store-room so

many times that she expected every year the boxes and barrels would sing out at her, "Hi, old lady, got back again?" And she said she thought I was *old* enough and *wise* enough to relieve her of the care, and she'd leave it to *me*.

Joe says she *must* have been rash to propose letting me loose in a store-room, but he was thinking of his old fishing-rod that's up there. I dare say he thinks the *moths* will get at it. But I didn't pay any *attention* to him, but bought me a real lovely apron to put on, and went right to work. The first thing I did was to take an old basket of rags that ma has had round for *years*, and I took them down and sold them to the rag-man. Ma was away that day, you see, and I afterwards found out that they were old *linen* that she had been saving for years and years to keep in case of *accidents*, and I only got sixteen cents for them. Ma was quite wild about it; but I think it was a good thing, for who wants to think that the old stuff is just *wait-*

ing there till the time for you to break your neck, or cut yourself, or have cancers or something, just as if we'd got to *sometime* before we die?

Joe was dreadfully afraid I should do as the women do in newspaper items and jokes, — sell his old clothes for pink plaster images. The idea! He hasn't the least reliance on me, and I try to be so *sisterly* to him. Of course I can't be like those sisters in novels who mix nice drinks and fill pipes for their brothers, and expostulate with them for playing pool and things of that kind. I should expect to be blown up higher than Flood Rock if I *did;* but I help him in a *great* many ways, such as telling him what the girls say about their *brothers* and *husbands* and *fathers;* and you see he gets a great many points in *that* way, and *ought* to appreciate me, — but he *doesn't.*

So when I came to his things in the attic I just drew a sort of sacred circle round them and didn't dare venture in for a *while;* but I

thought I saw a *moth* on them, and I knew it wasn't *right* to let it *go*, for ma's little motto about moths is that "eternal vigilance" one, that is on something or other; so I just looked over his boxes *lightly*, you know, and such *lots* and *lots* of boots and shoes as he has got! If *I* had so many there would be no *end* to the sarcastic things he would say to me; but he just has them made, and if they are too *small* he don't want to tell even the *shoemaker*, and he just slys them up *there*.

You know a man always wants to try all the new styles, just as women do, only they are so *meachin* about it, for they don't want you to think they are so giddy; but they *are*, — they are all alike, and no matter how many *stocks* and things they have, they *always* find time to ponder over their clothes, and get neckties that will go well with their mustaches. And Joe had such lots of lovely *ties* it seemed just a waste of golden opportunity not to hand them down to posterity in a crazy

quilt; only it would never do for Joe to *know* it. You see, the minute a man *misses* a thing it begins to be the loveliest and most valuable thing he ever *possessed*, and he keeps you reminded of it for *years*, till you feel like an escaped *convict*. So you see it wouldn't do for Joe to see his old ties in a cushion, and I arranged with Susie Green to let me have her *husband's* old ties, and I'd do as well by her with *Joe's;* and they neither of them would be wiser, because they hate each other like *everything*, and *never* call on each other, and *Susie* and *I* would be so much in, instead of the Foreign Mission.

Just imagine those awful men that eat each other travelling round their island in Joe Perkins's Waukenphast shoes and polka-dotted neckties, and that is all Joe ever *does* with them; he wouldn't offer one to *me* if I should eat forty men, and I think I was doing no more than right to make the seizure, — don't you think so, Poesie, dear? Only if Susie and I

ever get *mad*, and begin to *twit*, things will be kind of *choppy* with us for a *while*.

And I found an old coat of Joe's, that had the *loveliest* silk sleeve-linings, and I just cut them out for sachet-bags. You know, I turned the sleeves right *back* again, so that he never would know it if he *should* happen to put the old thing on,— which he *won't*, unless he is a perfect old *skin*.

I feel that I was repaid in *several* ways for hunting for moths, for just *casually* I happened to find some *hair-pins* in one of Joe's coat-pockets, and then I looked in them *all*, and in all the breast-pockets I found some; and although that may seem a very simple thing to *some* people, *you* and *I* know, Poesie, dear, what an *effective* thing those hair-pins will be to hold over Joe's head,— *only* that I can't do it except in an extreme *case*, because he will know I've been to his *boxes*. Mean, *isn't* it? But I've kept the *hair-pins*, and I'm going to match the girls to them.

You know hair-pins are so *different* you can always know who they belong to. Some girls never *think*, and wear great cast-iron-looking things, that look as if their head was skewered up with them; and some wear little short, fat, black ones that keep dropping out till the girl leaves a perfect *trail* behind her, and you can trace her all over the country by them. But of all girls I *distrust*, the one that wears slim, slender hair-pins is *the* one. Her hair always looks real *firm* and *smooth*, and you can't help feeling that she keeps the same hair-pins for *years*, and lays them away nicely in a little pile every night, instead of flinging them down anywhere, and using her mother's in the morning; but I wouldn't trust her with a *postal-card*.

Just after I finished *Joe's* boxes (I just took the things *out*, I didn't put them back, for I thought it would do them good to *air*, and I'd pack them next day) I came across an old box of letters of mine, and they were *so*

interesting I just sat down and read them *all*. Of course it hindered me; but before I knew it it was dinner time, and I had to leave everything just as it *was*, and *after* dinner I went over to see the water-colors at the Museum. I *always* do something real *steady* and *respectable* when ma is away, for it sounds well to tell of when she gets *home*.

The next day I thought I would commence on it real *early*, so as to please ma when she got home; but I hadn't been up there five *minutes* before I found a glove of Maud Tuft's, that she lost *ever* so long ago, and always thought *Dick Hascot* took it; and I was so anxious to let her know that Dick Hascot *didn't* have her old glove that I just left everything and *went*, and I never *thought* about that old store-room again till ma got home; and ma wasn't as pleased, of course, as I *meant* her to be.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXIX.

BOSTON, November, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Do you want to vote? *Do* you think we are responsible for the character of the *School Board?* You see, they've been sending round little 6 × 3 inch Appeals, as Joe says, and they are all about party affiliation and the shortcomings of women; and, although I don't quite understand it *all*, the way in which it calls you Women of Boston! — with a capital W and an exclamation point at the *end* of it — is *very* impressive. And Clara and I both think we will go and be poll-taxed, and get the cold bulge on those horrid, unscrupulous politicians.

Do you see how they can *be* unscrupulous? It would be all *I* could do to *be* a politician, without *cheating*. I never could understand the Constitution of the United States, even. I

can understand George Washington's Address, that was over in the back part of that old United States history, although I *hope* they weren't waiting for a collation while he made it. But what they mean by those old electoral votes, and all that, I don't know, I'm sure. And I *don't* see how the president ever has the heart to go fishing, or do anything *amusing*, I'm sure. It must be dreadful to be a man, anyway, and have to understand everything, and *pay* for everything. Of course you *have* to understand all about "corporation papers," and "call loans," and that little @ with a tail to it, or they'd call you a *cake*. And then, it must be *dreadfully* irritating to always keep paying the bills.

When I remember how very hard I found it just to pay my *own* bills I am not surprised that there are so *many* men who go back on their *families*. I suppose some days their families, from their wife down to the infants, ask him for *money;* and I suppose *those* are the

days when a man likes to get downtown all alone by *himself*, and eat a good, big dinner. Why Susie Green says, whenever she asks her father for money it very *nearly* gives her nervous prostration. She just dreads it for *weeks* and *weeks;* and she says she often uses a whole bottle of shoe-dressing on one pair of shoes before she'll ask her pa for a new pair; and *then*, she says, he seems to have an idea that they cost about seventy-five cents, and that she'll give him back the change. And she wore her seal-skin sacque till it looked like a horse-car driver's before she could work herself up to the point of asking him for something *else*. She is married now, and I just wonder if her "James" acts so. I suppose she's been too *polite* to ask him for money *yet*. But she will very soon get over that, and act real good and natural, Joe says. She will run after him when his beefsteak and coffee have gone down his back *anyway*, and tell him she'd like a little money.

Joe says women invariably say a "*little* money;" but if you *give* them a "little" they want *more*. I asked him if it wouldn't be nice to try once giving them *lots* and *lots*, and see what they'd do. He said, "Pooh! they would *take* it, and say they spent it all for crash and bed-linen." He says, according to a woman's *statement*, she buys enough crash and linen for a city hospital. Of course, all he knows about it is what he hears *other* men say. But that hasn't got anything to do with voting, *has* it?

Do you think we *ought* to vote, and *do* you suppose it would make any difference? It makes me *giggle* to think of Susie Green and Cora Shallow voting. Of course, Cora would vote just as her husband does. She wouldn't dare to *sneeze* without his approval. I don't know *who* I should vote like. I should *want* to vote,—you know I couldn't *help* wanting to vote just as Charlie Brood does; but I suppose that would be "disgraceful partisanship," and

wouldn't be nice. Don't you think it would be horrid to go and be registered? How superior and sarcastic the men must look; and the women all look smart, I suppose. Don't you really *think*, Poesie, dear, that they want to vote just so they can *crow?* because they *could* crow. I guess the men would feel *very* much irritated, for they wouldn't seem half so *dignified*, nor as if they *amounted* to half so much if women voted *too*.

I think men are *very* airy voting days, and go round among women with sort of a "What-do-I-feed-you-for" air, which makes you feel like running your tongue out at them when their backs are turned, and you would *like* to tie strings round things in the dark so they'd trip over them; but you know all that would be stopped if *we* voted, and very likely they'd want to trip *us* up. And Clara and I think quite seriously of it, — of voting, I mean, — and I've made another attempt to abolish my *bangs*. Not that I think

you couldn't vote *with* them. I'm not so narrow as all *that*, for just think of the dudes that vote just like men, and *their* votes are just as good as *anybody's;*. but you see you kind of feel impressive when you think of doing anything of that kind, just the same as I couldn't *possibly* wear bangles to a Lowell Institute lecture, or carry my card-case to a funeral.

So one night, when it was too late for any one to *call*, and I thought *Joe* wouldn't see me, I cut the heels off an old pair of *boots*, and took off my bustle and my *corsets*, and brushed my hair right back, and did it in kind of a scrubby pug; then I put a ruching in my neck, and pulled my hat down over my eyes and my sleeves down over my knuckles, and took a twine bag in my hand to see how I'd *look* going down to vote; for, although I know we shouldn't all look *alike*, don't you really think that most of the women and girls

who really *hanker* after voting look that way? Of course there are lots that are *willing* to vote if it is *necessary*, and others that are *howling* for it, and when I dressed me up like that I felt as if I was a *howler*.

They say that one's feelings are governed a great deal by one's *clothes*, and I think it must be so; for if I wore such clothes as *that* I know I could vote without a *quiver*. Sometimes I have hats that make me feel as nice as a University girl, and then I'll have one that makes me feel as giddy as a Conservatory girl, and I am always afraid I shall act giddy with the University hat on by *mistake* and distress people. Appearances are so very deceitful about people; you can't tell half the time whether a person knows anything or not.

I met a young man, the other evening, and you would have thought he knew what everything was made of, from stars to *mud*, by the way he *talked*, and you'd have thought

he was born way back in the first chapter of the Bible, he seemed so wise; but he didn't know enough to get me home from Dorchester in a *horse-car*, he was so stupid. You see, I met him at Cora Shallow's. She is always inviting girls to *tea* and to *card-parties*, and sending them home with new young men that she has discovered; and I am afraid every time I *go* there she will send some *ruffian* home with me. She has all sorts and kinds, and *this* discovery enjoyed hearing himself talk so much that he didn't catch on to the horse-car arrangement; and I expected to find myself in *Dorchester Bay*, or on the Old Colony *track*, before I got *home*. He seemed to know so much I felt too polite to make any *suggestions;* and first we got almost to Milton, and then over by that dreadful-looking old *brewery*, with that horrid old man up in the wall taking a *drink;* and it was only by great firmness and presence of mind that I

managed to get him into a horse-car that took us *home*.

If it had been some one real *nice*, of course it wouldn't have mattered at all; but he was so busy talking he almost forgot to pay my car-fare, and he let two or three ladies stand up, and he finally got me off at the wrong street, and he said he guessed he'd come in a minute after we *did* get home, and explain to me about a cricket-match he went to in England; and so he came *in*, and the cricket-matches lasted so long that ma nearly coughed her head off up at the head of the stairs, and Joe got to sleep in the library and snored, and I began to wonder where Cora found him, — in Somerville or Taunton. And then ma came down and waked up Joe, and they held a consultation in a shrill whisper, and Joe says he had just got three words of his speech ready, — he'd got as far as "You d—d fool!" (awful, wasn't it, if he really *meant* to say so?)—

when the fire-bells rang and the discovery *went*, because he says he is always in hopes to see the action of hand-grenades on a *fire*, because he knows just how they are *fixed;* and, do you know, I never see a hand-grenade but I want to *wink* at it. But he was in favor of women's voting. Joe says he should know it. Now, *would* you, if you were *me*, Poesie, dear, want to vote or *not?* I meant to write more about it, but got off the subject so.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXX.

BOSTON, November, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Susie Green told me that one day, going up in an *elevator*, — she don't know where it *was*, and I shouldn't think she *would*, for she is always going up and down elevators, and never *thinks* of walking; and how she can *stand* them I don't see, for I always feel like an air-cushion with the air squeezed *out* of me when they start her up, and when they stop I feel like a *top;* and some of them twist and creak so that I just want to grab the elevator man and *yell;* and I can't see why Susie always waits for them. She will stand and look, and *look* up till her bonnet slips off, and every one *knows* that it don't do any good to press the old electric button. It may be fun to *do* it, and you *may* think you are

ordering the old thing up or down; but you are *not*, for it just runs up and down perfectly *regardless* of it. But you know it would take a *pile-driver* to drive *some* things into Susie's head, and that's one of them. And she'll ring and look, and look and ring, till it *comes*, and then she'll get in serenely and sit *down*, and then get up and get *out*, and how she ever had time enough in one to hear any one *say* anything, I don't see; but she heard one girl say to *another*, in one, that she saw a letter you had written to *Cora Shallow*, and in it you said that you were afraid that your Peppermint's efforts at Self-Improvement would break up all her friends and her family; and you would like to know how long it was going to *continue*, and if anybody *saw* any improvement, and if they'd be kind enough to tell you in *what* it consisted, and how my family bore up under it!

Now, isn't it perfectly *dreadful* of a girl to try to break up friendship in that way? And

isn't it fortunate that I am *wise* enough to *know* that you never *wrote* such a letter about me, and that you *wouldn't* do it for anything in the *world?* Susie Green is a dreadful *exaggerator,* to say nothing else; but I don't know whether *she* exaggerated this time, or those *girls.* But I just *know,* Poesie, dear, how *interested* you are in my Self-Improvement, and I know you had rather see me improved than anything else in the *world.*

I know that you'd rather I would write you about such *important* things than to write you such gossipy letters as *some* girls write, — all about everything and everybody they know. Some girls go *on* so! Why, the other afternoon Joe wanted to get into Noyes's to get him a tie, and there were five girls in the door-way; and first he said he *waited* a while on the curbstone, so as not to disturb them, and then he just sauntered up and hovered over them a minute as sort of a *hint.* But he said they were looking right into each

other's mouths, and it was of no use. He says *one* girl was telling something her French teacher had said to her, and what she had talked back to him. The one *next* to her was backing up her statements, and making a few remarks of her own to the *third* one, who was trying to listen to them, and at the same time get the *fourth* girl to pull her linen collar up higher for her and *pin* it, and, of course, she didn't do it *right*, and they were squabbling about it; and the fifth one was humming "See-Saw," and keeping time with her umbrella. And he said he didn't know *what* to do, for he must have the tie, and it was getting *late*, and he was just wondering if he shouldn't have to go and get his friend Jones, who, Joe says, understands girls *perfectly*, and can always get round them, *figuratively* speaking, and he probably could *literally*, only he thought it would seem very foolish, and no one would *believe* it if he should say he had to go way down to Devonshire

street to get a man to get five girls out of Noyes's door-way; and he was just thinking he would do *without* his tie when a lady went by with a sable garment, with a tail border to it, and he says quick as a flash one of them said, "*Gurls!*" as solemn and *low* as could be, and they all five squeezed out in front and looked at her till she got past, and then, he said, he ventured timidly up and said, "Beg pardon!" But they had all closed ranks again, and if he hadn't happened to catch the eye of the *fifth* one he should have retired defeated; but she said, "Why, *gurls*, here's a man wants to come *in*, don't you *see?*" and before he could say a word of *thanks* they had gone round the corner as if they were playing "Snap-the-whip," and nothing was left but a giggle.

He went in *then*, and met a friend inside, who said he had had *just* such experiences. He said he knew a girl up at the new American Seminary, and she invited him up to

AT THE NEW AMERICAN SEMINARY. — p. 288.

hear some man presented to the public; and he said he went innocently enough, but he'd rather walk on a barbed-wire fence in his bare *feet* than do it *again*. He *knew* there were about five hundred girls there, and he anticipated considerable pleasure in seeing so much youth and beauty; but he thinks *now* it is one thing to *dream* of five hundred girls, and another thing to have them all *looking* at you; and his girl kept him waiting and waiting.

And first he marked out little patterns with his cane on the floor, and then he examined all the old musical duffers' names preserved in glass on the windows; but he didn't *dare* fix his eyes at an *ordinary* level, for he'd meet so many eyes it made him feel as if he'd like to get out into the graveyard back of the house, and the girls all looked and acted so much alike, and seemed all so sort of twisted up all together, he didn't feel sure that he'd know *his* girl if he saw her; and

he began to feel that *he* was the one that was being presented to the public, and began to think how cool and nice it must be out on the sidewalk or *in* the graveyard, and he felt that he respected music-teachers more highly than ever before as he saw them dash through those girls in any direction they *pleased*, and not seem at all disconcerted by them.

Finally he thought he'd make a brave dash for the door, and the music might go to Sheol, and the girl that invited him, too; but he saw it was of no use. He ran against "Sue," and "Lou," and "Harrie," and "Carrie," and "Annie," and "Fannie;" and he says if a girl up at one end of the building wanted to know how much a yard a girl down at the other end paid for the tubular braid on her brown homespun the whole corridor was blockaded until she found *out;* and if a good-looking Professor went along there was sort of a gathering around him, till he had smiled equally on *all* of them,

and then they seemed happy, and all went off loving each other. He says they are the most *affectionate* girls he ever saw, and he says it's very fetching and very catching, and if he should be there long *he* would want to go about locking arms with the girls, and with his arm round their shoulders; and he began to think he *should* be there long, for he couldn't get near the door.

First he'd bump into a yellow-haired girl, and then two black-haired girls would sort of encircle him; and the worst of it all was, that, although they were all very polite, he seemed to feel that he was *intruding*, and he heard the remark, "that great, horrid man," on all sides; and yet as he couldn't get *out*, in spite of his best endeavors, it was very mortifying and squelching, and he wished he was an old instrument in the glass case, or an old master on a bust, or *anything* that the girls would never *look* at. So when his girl did find him,

at last, he was in a *pitiful* condition, and the box of Page's candy he had brought her was so stuck up it wouldn't come out of the box. But he felt braver after she came, and really enjoyed himself, though the whole five hundred seemed to be following them round and snickering during the evening.

But *his* girl seemed perfectly calm, and seemed to *expect* a sort of retinue as an honor *due* her for having a gentleman with her, and he thinks the girls *mean* all right. They think people like it, and it is sort of an *attention*, they are so *loving*. But he says it was a dreadful experience, and he says he thinks there ought to be a law for girls to "move on," same as there is for vagrants. Isn't it ridiculous that girls will talk so long about nothing, and expose themselves so to criticism? And it makes me more thankful than *ever* that Clara and I have our minds on more *important* things, and are *above* it all. And the idea of Susie Green thinking I'd *believe*

that you said such rattling things about me, and to hear it in an elevator, too! Every one knows that *no one* is responsible for what is *said* in an elevator. They are too *nervous* to be truthful, and don't you think I believe a *word* of it.

Yours,

PEPPERMINT.

XXXI.

BOSTON, November, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE:—

We have had a reunion of the old school class, and I missed you *so* much! I didn't eat half as much as I *paid* for, and neglected several *very* fascinating and satisfactory young men who had been secured for the evening. It was such an *awful* miss, too,—way off in that old, watery Venice; and every time I want to *tell* you anything I have to write it down in black and white, and put my name to it, and *stamp* it as if it was some old legal thing; and *then* you don't *get* it till everything is cold. I don't see what you want to stay there for, anyway, when I need you so much to talk to. Joe says that is probably why you *went*. He says nothing but the *ocean* would drown the sound of my

voice, and he supposes you want to *keep* it drowned. Joe always *liked* you, you know; he says you never say anything.

But about the reunion: all the old girls were there, just as they are at *all* reunions. Some of them brought their husbands sort of triumphantly, and others had secured young men who might look *suggestive* of a husband, and others came *alone*, — some sort of sneaking, and others as if they gloried in it. You remember Sallie Slammer? She is a great tall thing now, and always wears double-breasted jackets and short *skirts*, and shirt-fronts and large *cuff*-buttons, and an English *walking*-hat; and she likes horses and dogs, and drives herself, with her elbows out, and keeps examining her horse's *hoofs* and *mouth*. She won't crimp her hair or wear jewelry, and trains her bull-pup and her setter-dog to follow her *heels*. She's perfectly *sure*, you know, of everything she *says;* never made a mistake, you know, in all her born *days*,

and it is just "Stand from under" and "Attention, company!" when she comes round.

She never talks woman talk, but man talk; and yet she pretends she don't *like* men, and she talks about them as if they were sidewalks, or something of that kind that we couldn't do *without*, but yet are wholly unattractive and uninteresting. And she likes to throw her *shoulders* back, and thump her *chest*, and say how *healthy* she is, and what walks she takes, and how she can *row* and *swim*. And I dare say she *can* do all those things, — in fact, I *know* she does, — but she needn't feel so smart about it.

All the little, thin fellows, with no resolution or ideas, think she is *lovely;* but Joe says she seems to be always getting up her muscle and waiting for a man to tell her she isn't as smart as *he* is; but he says it is all a waste of energy on her part, for no one will ever *dare* to tell her so, no matter what their private *opinion* may be; and he says as for

offering her any delicate little attentions he should as soon think of taking a ride on the cow-catcher of an engine. Dick Hascot tried to climb a hill with her last summer, and he felt like a collapsed balloon when he got up there.

Then Emma Prym was there, — you remember *her*. She never used to do anything *wrong* at *school*, you know; and she never does *now*. She is one of those girls that is all of a color, — pale hair, and pale eyes, and pale face; and she always wears a pale *bonnet*, with her strings tied just *exactly* under her *chin*, and she never gets it knocked on one side or off behind, and her dresses never come unlooped or wear off round the bottom, and her boots never get stubbed out at the toes or run over at the heel. Her gloves are never out at the fingers, and her stocking-supporters never burst; and she wouldn't say "Darn" or "Holy Moses!" if they *did*. I suppose she is as *good* a girl as ever lived,

and you always connect her in your mind with soups for the poor and Bible readings.

She never says she *knows* a thing, but she *thinks* it, and she went to all the A.B.C.F.M. meetings, and thinks it is wicked to *sell* your old clothes. I don't believe she'd go to even an oratorio in a *theatre;* and she's one of those that thinks the Sunday papers haven't come to *stay*. She only associates with people who run *Sunday schools* and assist the *heathen;* and, although she is very *polite* always, I know she sort of thinks of me as a variety actress and Joe as a prize-fighter. I don't believe I should want her to come to see me if I was poor or anything, for I guess she'd bring more Scripture than grub; and she would not be very *encouraging*, for one would judge by her *manner* that life wasn't worth living *anyway*, and we'd better scratch round and get ready for the other world as quick as we *could*.

I introduced Joe to her, and he said she

was as satisfactory and responsive as a dish of cold oatmeal; and I asked him who I *could* introduce him to that would make it pleasant for him, and he said if I could find a real medium sort of a girl, who would talk about the weather and the picture-galleries, and the mud on West street, and the mud on *Washington* street, and how she *adored* Dixey and Booth, and *hated* Greek and three-button gloves, he thought he could manage to keep alive; and he said, above *all* things, to find him a girl with an *appetite*. He says a girl with an appetite will be perfectly devoted to you all the evening, for fear she will lose you before supper-time, and you can interest her on any subject, from India to South Boston, till you smell the coffee; after that, the deluge.

So I found Sally Esy, — you remember *her*. She is grown into one of those girls that go round with a thump, and that never *have* any morbid or extreme views on *anything*, and

are real sort of comfortable. She cracks nuts with her teeth, and crimps her hair with a slate-pencil or a gimlet, and buttons sometimes come off of her *boots*, and she don't always think to wipe the mud off her *rubbers*, and she spends more time trimming her hats than she does darning her stockings, and she never introspects her *feelings* to see if they are up to the high-water mark. She is such a *comforting* girl to meet; you always feel *sure* she's done something worse or more shiftless than *you* have; and that is *so* much nicer than Louisa Manners. *She* was there the other night, and you could hear her little, self-satisfied laugh everywhere you went. She is *married*, you know; but she is just the *same* as ever.

You remember she could always sharpen her lead-pencil without getting her *fingers* dirty, and she'd make one apron last two *weeks*. Well, she's just so *now*. She is never flustrated, or loses her self-possession at *all*.

She always has her umbrella on rainy days, her parasol on sunny days, and her muff on cold days, and her cuffs always show just so much below her sleeves. She never forgets herself in *conversation*, or lets her feelings lie round loose in *any* way. She always puts "ing" on in its proper place, and always says "literatuah" and "furnituah," and not "literachewer" and "furnichewer," as it is much more *natural* to say, — isn't it, Poesie, dear?

She lives out in the *suburbs*, and comes in on the 10.15 train, with a nice little *bag* with her initials and an old piece of faded woodbine embroidered on it. She always comes in on the 10.15, because it is *proper* to do so; and she always goes out on the 12.45, or else the 4.45, for the same reason. She always has her teeth filled at the proper time, and never gets out of sewing material. Shouldn't you think it would be a relief to her to do something *horrid* sometime? No one could *say* anything about it, for she's been so

proper all her life they wouldn't have the *face* to.

She brought her husband with her, and he is just *like* her. *He* looked as if it bored *him* a little, and he would get round the corner out of sight if he could, and "cuss," as Joe says; but probably he never *dares* to. They said just so much, and *smiled* just so much, and ate just so much, and went home at just the right time. People at a reunion *always* act proper, though. If some of them have been perfect *villains*, and *hated* each other, they pretend that they always were very intimate, and dwelled together in brotherly love; and if they've got *any* unpleasant little *circumstances*, they just hide them for all they are worth.

This is all I can tell you *about* the affair. We all went simpering around, and asked each other questions, and there were the usual speeches made about the brilliancy of the class, and the mark they have most of

them *made;* and every one *knows* we were the stupidest class that ever *graduated*, and not *one* of us has made any mark at *all*, except Susie Green, — and she made it by *marrying* some one awfully rich; but of course we had to have these things said, because it was a reunion, and it wouldn't have done *not* to have had them, any more than it would do not to make any pleasant and creditable remarks on the defunct at a *funeral*. So I suppose it was a very nice reunion, and don't you feel very bad to think you weren't *there?*

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXII.

BOSTON, December, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Don't you think Thanksgiving is a *lovely* day? Of course it is sort of perplexing, and ma says dreadfully *wearing*, to have two Sundays come in a week; but it is so pleasant to read about the "festive board," and "family gatherings," and "groaning tables," and all that. We had a very *exciting* day; but I enjoyed it *so* much; for I never knew I had so many young men cousins before. When we first heard of the proposed gathering that we were invited to, Joe said he'd rather reunite with the half-breeds than the Perkins family *entire*, and ma said it made her teeth on edge to *think* of it; but *I* was *very* anxious to go; for I had heard ma speak of so many little episodes that had happened in the dif-

ferent families I felt as if I quite *knew* them all, and then I knew there were no other good-looking girls in the family; they all looked like old duds, *ma* said, and I thought very likely I should have the inside track, and I was quite anxious to *meet* them all.

Joe said ma was prejudiced in what she said about the *girls;* but I don't think she was at *all.* Hiram Perkins didn't think so, *either,* he said. He is one of the cousins I'd never met, and I think it is perfectly *dreadful* for families not to be more united; he's got the loveliest whiskers, — they sort of curl up *tight,* you know, like the hair-stuffing in furniture, and he's got such a meditative way of pulling them round and *biting* them. Joe says he could show me fellows in the Idiot Asylum *any* day that would do that, if *that's* what I admire; but Joe doesn't like that branch of the family, and didn't like it to see me letting Cousin Hiram see the kind of

collar-studs I had on. Thanksgiving morning, when we found it *rained* so, ma was *so* mad, for she didn't dare wear her best Surah; and she said she didn't want "Charles's wife" to see her with that old second-best silk of hers on.

I didn't know who "Charles's wife" was; but Joe says there is always one in *every* large family; he says he never knew of a family of any *size* that didn't have a "Charles's wife" in it to *talk* over and to talk over *them*. Well, as I say, ma was mad, and didn't know just what to do, for the *cars* don't go anywhere near Uncle Perkins's, and she said she didn't dare to have a *carriage*, because "Charles's wife" would say she was *stuck up*. And Joe was mad to think it rained, because, he said, the only way he had thought of to get rid of them all after dinner was to say he was going out to take a look at the *country* about there; but he said no man would think of going out to look at the country

such a day as *that*, and he should have to squirm round the house all day and not smoke.

If he went outside or *smoked*, "Charles's wife" would say he was *odd* or *fast;* and I began to feel that there was going to be a real circus. I tried to reason with Joe, for I wanted to go *very* badly, and I said he ought to *like* to be sociable such a day as Thanksgiving, just as the papers say, and return to the dear ones, and indulge in interchange of happy feelings in the bosom of his family; but he says there isn't any bosom to the Perkins family,—it's all gizzard,—and as for happy interchange of feelings, if they all got through the happy day without knocking each other silly he should be gratified; but still he said he was quite anxious to go.

I wanted to see "Charles's wife;" but *he* said he thought the sight of her couldn't be anything compared to the sight of Charles *himself*. He says he *never* had any curiosity

to see these smart women that are beating it round all over the country lecturing between meals, but he always has a *violent* curiosity to see their *husbands;* he says *there* is where the wonder comes in. So we finally *went*, and had a most *bewildering* time getting there, for they live out on one of those roads that you have to study up the *time-table* for, and after you think you've got the train time all by *heart*, find you've got your finger on the wrong *line* and have to start all *over* again; and Joe and ma got so *nervous* about it that he said their hands had a regular jim-jam shake on them, and I had to take my hat-pin to stick into the right train, only I got it into the *return* time *then*, and we just missed a train, and had to wait an hour and a half for another one; but Joe said he never had spent so short an hour and a half since he used to wait for the dentist. He said if ever a blinding, drifting snow-storm or a reckless train-wrecker could be

worked in to good advantage, it was at that time.

Ma and I never took our eyes off of him for a minute for fear he'd slip away from us. We even followed him out to a store where it said "Spiced Rum, 10 cts." It was so cold and dismal the name looked real hot and comfortable, and Joe said that was the way they *all* felt. He says people are always fishing up some mysterious *excuse* for a man's drinking. Either his *wife* has gone back on him, or his *business* or his *friends* have; he enjoys the "exhilarating effects" of it, or he wants to "drown dull care." They never seem to hit on the simple reason that he drinks because it *tastes* good.

Joe is very honest when he's *mad*, and he was *real* mad that day. When we got out at the station there were seventeen got out, too, and we tried to look *pleasant* and *friendly*, because we thought they must all be Perkinses; but as it turned *out* there was only one Perkins

among them, and he had sat behind us all the way down, and heard all our conversation about the family, because we thought he was nothing but an *essence*-pedler. There was a carriage waiting for us, but the man said he must wait till the *next* train to see if Charles's wife came; so we thought we'd be real polite and *accommodating*, and said we'd walk up to the house, — it was only a short way; so we did, but we hadn't been there fifteen minutes before we heard *one* of the cousins tell *another* that we were too mean to hire the coach up from the station. Wasn't that *horrid ?*

But, then, Thanksgiving is such a *lovely* day, and so full of kind and generous *feelings*, that one can afford to excuse things, can't they, Poesie, dear? When we first got there there wasn't any one to *receive* us, because Uncle Perkins and his wife were *upstairs* arranging how they should seat us at the table, and they got into *quite* a heated argument, for I heard

her say she wished she never had *seen* a Perkins; and *he* said there wouldn't *be* any nasty little disagreements in the Perkins family if it were not for the women they *married*. And she said those were *nice* sentiments for *Thanksgiving* day; but I *suppose* he was just going to say "*Damn* the day!" (Joe says he was), when Joe dropped his cane real loud on the register, and we didn't hear Uncle Perkins's voice again till he asked the blessing at the dinner.

Joe says he did nothing but interrupt rows all day, and he had a great deal better time than he *thought* he should. He says Uncle Perkins's family feelings extended to the cranberry-sauce, and *some* got a great deal more than *others*. We had considerable trouble in getting seated, for uncle and aunt hadn't seemed to come to any decision (probably because we interrupted them), and uncle would say, sort of firm, "Maria and John, you may sit *here;*" and aunt would say at the same

time, "No, they may sit *here;*" and Maria and John would go wandering *around*, while aunt and uncle *glared* at each other. And uncle gave a wish-bone to *one* of the grandchildren, and Charles's wife was so mad to think he didn't give it to infant *Charles*, that she pretended the turkey stuffing made her *sick*, and that made aunt feel sensitive about the *cook;* and Charles's wife got up and left the table, and uncle had to get up and go after her to smooth matters *over*, and we waited for him till everything got *cold* and didn't *taste* good.

Everybody being hungry, and sort of nervous, no one *said* much except the children; and *they* were hushed up as if they had been in *church*, and no one got real *happy* till it was time to go *home*, and then every one acted as if a cloud had been lifted, and they were really alive, after *all*. So strange they did not give themselves up more to the loving influences of the day! I had a *beautiful* time. Joe says,

to be the only *girl* with sixteen young men-cousins would make *any* girl lovingly influenced; but between the cold dinner and the family bile the loving influences felt in the rest of the family were about as small as the *turkey* was. But then, it was a *beautiful holy* day, *I* think.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXIII.

BOSTON, December, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

One good thing about your old Venice must be that you can't have many streets to walk across windy days like last Monday, and feel perfectly *miserable* because you *know* some one is behind you looking at the rip in the back of your boot. It's no use saying, as *ma* does, that there ought not to *be* any rip there; you and I know, Poesie, dear, the kind of girls that *don't* have any, and I'd rather have the rip than be the girl, hadn't *you?* Of course I don't mean that one always has rips in her boots. Sometimes you just feel that you look so *nice* you want to prance round like a circus-horse, and then other times you feel as unreliable as if you'd just been

"made up for the holiday trade," as some of those Christmas presents are that look so handsome till you commence to examine them. Christmas comes dreadfully hard on women. Men can go whistling about so *carelessly* till the last *minute*, and then pop in and buy things, — and they always buy the wrong thing, too; but nobody ever dares to *tell* them so, and they just go round as satisfied as can be, in blissful ignorance.

Why, last Christmas Joe gave me Macaulay's Essays, and gave ma a bracelet with horse-shoes and whips on it, as if she were a *sporting* woman, and we didn't know what to do. Of course *I* put the Essays right in a conspicuous place on my bookcase, and they *looked* real well, and this fall they were splendid to press leaves in, so many of them, and so heavy; but ma didn't dare *not* to wear her bracelet, and she didn't dare let any one see her with it *on*, so

she'd put it on for Joe to see, and if any one came she'd shove it up her sleeve with a kind of sleight-of-hand performance; and there we went to all that *trouble*. But if we give Joe anything *he* doesn't like — in fact, we never gave him anything he *did* like — he always fires his opinion at us red-hot.

Cora Shallow's husband gave her a beautiful riding-whip last Christmas, — a *riding*-whip, Poesie! — and if Cora should ever find herself on a horse she'd go *wild;* but he said it was so *pretty* he thought he'd *buy* it; and then he didn't like it to think she didn't seem more *enthusiastic* over it.

But I was going to tell you about a theatre party I went to the other night. Susie Green gave it. I never can think of her *husband's* name; we always call him "he" or "him," and Susie always speaks of him as "my husband," so as to give him a sort of an air of being *something;* no one would ever imagine he was *anything*. You know Susie

Green couldn't have had any one that knew *much;* that is, no one who knew much would have had *her;* but he knew enough to know she is *pretty*, and of course she would always dress well, for she doesn't think of anything *else*.

I've heard of women treating men like poodle-dogs, but I think she treats him like a parasol or an umbrella, — spreads him out and shuts him up just when she pleases. She always spreads him out before company. He is one of those men who only have business from ten till four, and frequently, when you go there to call, he lets you in *himself*. He is real *pleasant*, and seems to enjoy having the girls *go* there; but the minute he seems to get real happy and *entertained* Susie will shut him up by sending him out to order a carriage, or get her vinaigrette filled, or some other little errands, such as women always have ready for their husbands that have retired from business.

Isn't it funny? — an old lady told me, the other day, that when women are young they always want their husbands to retire from *business*, and when they are old they want them to retire from the *house;* but that's nothing to do with the theatre party, is it? Well, the invitations were perfectly *gorgeous*, all written in Susie's very most topping style, and the whole thing clinched by a coat-of-arms on the seal, and all the four girls that were invited were running round to see each other all the morning after they were *received*, to see if any one knew where she *got* her coat-of-arms, and if it *meant* anything.

Joe said it *looked* to *him* like a hair-pin and a potato-masher; but it was quite impressive, *anyway*, and we couldn't help *respecting* Susie a great deal *more* than we did when she stuck her envelopes down with her *tongue*.

Well, we all met at Susie's house, and

I must say she mixed things up *horribly*. She sort of paired us off, so to have things *systematic;* but she missed her calculations *terribly*. She had laid out a *very* simple young man for me. It may have been his *liver*, but I don't think he was very bright. He looked as if he had soaked his head in glycerine, and then taken his hair-brushes and made two sort of curved pitches toward his temples, and his skin and hair made me think of pongee. His shoulders were *very* sloping, like Venus, or some of those pictures of "Types of Female Beauty," and he held his arms just as if he were holding up the sides of his skirts. Of course I don't mean he had any skirts *on*, but he had the *appearance*. He couldn't seem to talk about anything but Mary Anderson and *Aimée*. Goodness, if Aimée should wink *once* at him it would blow him over; and as for Mary Anderson — my sakes!

Maud Tuff had an æsthetic young man with

leanings toward *theology*, and I don't suppose he'd have *gone* to anything but Salvini. But you know theologs can always go to see anything real bloody and heart-rending, and it doesn't cloud their soul at *all*. But the idea of letting *Maud* off on him. I should as soon have thought of firing a pistol off at my grandmother, if I'd been Susie. And then poor Lillie Auburndale — the quietest, most *monosyllabic* girl you ever saw — had De Jones Blazay, who is simply a perfect stage-villain. Of course he is very entertaining, and makes you feel a great deal more comfortable than *good* people do; but *after* you've talked with him you feel kind of *bilious*, as if you had been eating something *very* unwholesome, and I don't believe poor Lillie will ever feel real *lady-like* again, after sitting side of him a whole evening. He is very calm and collected, and probably wouldn't be *scared* if he were under the old court-house in an earthquake; and he always sees every-

thing you want or drop immediately, he is so accommodating.

Joe said he saw him late one night, and he thought he was trying to get the moon for some girl, — at least he *acted* so. Of course I know Joe didn't *mean* it; but I actually think he *would* get it if he *could*. Well, you see, everything being mixed so, we had to talk cross-lots. Of course Maud could have managed De Jones Blazay much better than Lillie did, and Lillie would have enjoyed the young man that had leanings toward religion, and I would have enjoyed *anything*, — *anything*, *fast* or *slow*, but that *sand-peep* Susie gave me. We went in the horse-cars, not to save *expense*, but because Susie thought it would be more *fun;* ordinarily it *would*, but in this case we all thought it would be fun when we got *home*.

But we thought we'd make the best of it with what material we had, so I talked to Susie's husband (I was so mad at her for

thinking that thing she gave me would be *congenial* to me, that I began to like her *husband*); and Susie talked to Lillie's young man, and Lillie talked to Maud's young man, and Maud talked to a gentleman she met in the car, whom she hadn't seen for ten *years;* and the conductor had to get off back and run round front when he wanted to collect fares, for he could not get through us; and nobody could get *out* of the car till they got way by their place, because we kept on talking so the conductor got interested, and didn't pay any attention.

That was the only fun we had, for you wouldn't have thought eight of us could have made so much commotion. People got as *mad;* but we didn't take any notice of them. I think when eight people are going to the theatre people ought to *expect* to get out of their way and be accommodating, don't you? When we got to the theatre we got into the wrong slip. The usher showed

us the right one; but we were all trying to bow to Cora Shallow, who was up in the *balcony*, and we made a mistake, and ever so many people had to get up, and then when they found we'd made a mistake, they were so *mad*. I should have thought they'd have been glad to sit *down* again, instead of being so mad.

Maud always wants to go out between the acts; she wants to do everything as they do it in *New York*. She says it's a good place to copy after, because every one does such comfortable things there. Joe asked me if the people about us found it overwhelmingly comfortable when we giggled out and pranced in again; but we didn't care for *them*. It was dreadfully uncomfortable to talk *across* so, though, because the feathers and things in our hats got all mixed up, and went up the young men's noses, and we punched them with our elbows and crowded them; but that all made it exciting, and when a girl has had

an *exciting* time she can feel that she has fairly enjoyed herself. We had a *lovely* supper at Young's, and we felt that we had *carried* it, and that we would like to chew Susie up, too. I forgot to say that the *play* was "Coriolanus." It was lovely, all but Salvini's legs.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXIV.

BOSTON, December, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Clara and I have decided that it isn't right to devote all our time to *intellectual* improvement, but should think of our *moral* welfare; and we decided to take classes in the Mission School, and do our part toward the general improvement of mankind. Lots of girls we know have had classes for *years*, and they seem to feel so much superior to the girls that go to *matinées* that I really was anxious to see how it *felt*. Ma was quite anxious when I told her our plans, and said she hoped none of the ladies on the committee would look at my hemming, and she said she'd rather buy me tickets to *matinées* for six months than have them see me make button-holes; but I explained to her that *I* wasn't going to do the sewing,

the *children* were, and if there were any tough-looking button-holes *about*, of course they would be laid to the *children*.

She felt rather relieved after I'd explained it *that* way; but still she said; wouldn't I like to go visiting to New York, or something of that kind, to take up my *mind?* But I don't think it is *right* to be diverted from any good purpose, do you? So I thought of all the martyrs I could remember, and put ma right down. Not that I think any great *of* the martyrs. I think it was very foolish of them, and very *unnecessary*, to be stoned to death and burned up and flung over things as they were, when, if they'd just *waited*, things would have come out all right, and they could have died *respectably*. Just think of that girl, Saint Somebody (I always get her mixed up with the one that kept saying "Scissors"), who kept letting the water come higher and higher, and wouldn't give up her religion.

I would have — well, *lied* about it, — wouldn't

you, Poesie, dear?—told the people on the wharf that I had *given* it up, and it would be all right, and then I'd fixed it up with the religion *afterwards*, — *anything* to have got out of the water; but still it is beautiful, *isn't* it, to think of their bearing so *much?* And Clara and I felt that we didn't care for what people said at *all*. Of course Joe made the usual disagreeable remarks about mission work at *home*, and said that all women go to help the poor for is to amuse *themselves;* and he says, of course sometimes the thing works all *right*, but on the average there is more amusement than there is help; and lots of other things, that show how uncharitable a man is about everything but his *own* affairs.

The first afternoon Clara and I went we met lots of girls going on different rackets; and I met Dick Hascot, and he said he was getting *fearfully* tired of *matinée* girls, and he thought girls ought to give more time to *charity;* and couldn't he carry my bag for

me down to the school, and he'd come for me when it was through, and I began to feel "that peace of mind which only good works can bestow and the glow that always follows the ignoring of all *self*." (I found this on the back of a receipt-book; you know they always throw in a lot of advice for the family with the receipts.) Clara was *mad*. She said she wished there was one street in Boston we could go through without meeting *encumbrances* of that sort; and I told her I should think *she* might walk all round Boston without meeting any, and *then* she got mad, and we went into the mission-school by two different doors, and I was very much troubled, because I was going to ask her about the things we *sewed* on, and she just took a class way over the other side of the room to *spite* me. I had four children in my class, and I don't believe *one* of them had remembered to bring a pocket-handkerchief, and I could tell what they had

had to eat all day by their hands. I told them all to go and wash them, and they all said in a chorus that they *had* washed them, and then I didn't know what to say next. They all looked sort of *fierce*, and as if they were waiting to catch me *up* on something. So I looked round to see how the other girls acted. They all looked very smart and superior, but I couldn't make Clara *look* at me to ask her what I should do first. She seemed to be going ahead all right; but then, she is so *solemn*-looking no one would ever think she was doing wrong, *anyway*. I think that is a great advantage that such girls have over giddy-looking ones.

If Clara was just steeped up to her *ears* in some real villanous *thing* she would look so *important* and *solemn* that every one would imagine she was doing something *virtuous*. But Joe says if I should sit down in the middle of the Boston Athenæum I shouldn't look as if *I* knew anything, or *meant* any-

thing, and people would think I made a mistake, and wanted to go to the *Howard*. But Joe wasn't there *that* day to criticise, so I could look as solemn as I *pleased;* and I asked the girls what work they had brought to sew on, and they all said they hadn't brought *anything*. One girl said she had lost hers, and another one said hers had been *stolen*, and the other two wouldn't tell me anything about theirs; so I asked them what they'd *like* to sew on.

Of course I didn't really believe they *would*, but I wished *so* much that they'd say they wanted to make sachet-bags, or something of that kind, because I can make such *lovely* ones; and it was a *dreadful* shock to me when one of them brought out her father's stockings, and said she brought them to learn how to *darn* them. Oh, the holes were *awful*, Poesie, dear! I should think the man would have fallen through them, and they'd come up round his ears, they were so big. I asked

"ONE OF THEM BROUGHT OUT HER FATHER'S STOCKINGS."—p. 339

her if she had brought them before, because I heard the girl who had the class before had left it very *suddenly*, and I thought very likely this was the cause; but she said she never *had* brought them before, because her mother said none of the teachers there "knew as much as a yaller dog," and the stockings would last longer if she darned them herself.

But the girl said she knew there was going to be a new teacher in her class, and she thought perhaps *she* would know something, and she'd bring them. But she said I needn't mind, if I didn't know how to darn them, because none of the young-lady teachers knew anything. Only she said the children never told their folks, because they wouldn't let them come, and she said it was great fun to come, and she wouldn't miss it for *anything*. But I wasn't going to let her put me down in that way; so I was very haughty with her, and told her that of course I knew how to darn stockings. It was a *very* simple thing;

but as for darning her *family's* stockings it was against the rules of the society; and, besides, a man who had such active heels and toes as *that* ought to go barefooted, and not keep presenting his wife with a lot of perfectly yawning *chasms;* and I guess I impressed the child very much, for she sat still and snuffed all the afternoon.

One of the committee then gave the other children some things to sew on, and I tried to get Clara's eye so as to know how they went *together*,—not that I think she *knew* any better than I did, but I knew she'd have *some* idea about them, and I hadn't got *any;* but I couldn't make her look, and I just looked over into the next class and I thought I caught on to the way *that* teacher was doing it, so I told the children, and one of them said if I was going to make them *that* way I'd better wear them *myself*, and she commenced to snicker and nudge the other girls, and I tried to look very severe and stop them,

but they began to make *faces* at me. I'd given *anything* if I could have slapped them all round, and I was just going to give the biggest girl an awful pinch when the school commenced to sing "Come to Jesus," and the children said that meant to stop sewing.

I was real glad, for I was all tired out. The children said they wouldn't come again to me; but I told them I'd give them all an ice-cream soda ticket if they *would*, because I wanted to come, it seemed so *superior;* and then the superintendent made some lovely remarks about the new recruits who had joined the army in the vineyard, and how earnest and successful their labor seemed to be; and I *knew* she meant Clara and me; and although I had to kick one of the girls under the seat to keep her quiet, I just looked sweet, and as if I'd been in the vineyard business all my life, and I looked over to Clara, and she looked as if taking a mission-class was a mere *bagatelle*, she had been making sacrifices right

along all her life; so I think we made a very good impression, and we felt so nice about it we forgot we were *mad*, and went out together, and there were several very satisfactory fellows happened to be round there and walked home with all us superior girls; and I think it's full as good as a *matinée* for *opportunities*, and I can't understand why girls neglect their duties toward the poor so and get so wrapped up in *themselves*.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXV.

BOSTON, December, 1885.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I am going to wish you a merry Christmas, because it is the proper *thing* to do; but I don't think there is the least bit of *sense* in it. It's all very well for those half-dressed angels, floating round comfortably on pearl-colored clouds way up in the air, to shout good-will and peace round so generously; but if they had to slop round in the mud with their rubbers ker-watcherking, and a wet dress flapping round their ankles, and an umbrella to navigate, and a muff and bag, and three big parcels and six *small* ones to hold on to, and then get away up to Park street before they remembered something they'd got to get at *Hovey's*, I guess they'd drop their L.

Pinkham expression, and hustle things *round* some.

You see ma never will have bundles *sent* at Christmas time. She has a sort of a wicked suspicion that some of the neighbors will get them by mistake and *keep* them, even if the *carriers* are men of moral principle; or else she thinks some of the family will go browsing round among the bundles and find their own *presents*, and that, you know, is just the same as not giving them any present at *all*. Nobody ever thanks you for giving them a present they have *seen*, do they? I don't, anyway. I go round with my eyes on the ceiling, and I never dare to open the *laundry* bundle even, for fear I won't be *surprised*. But Joe is like *all* men, and after he *buys* you a present he won't let you have *any* peace till he *gives* it to you, or else lets out broad hints as to what it *is;* and then he expects you to be surprised when you get it, and

tell him you never suspected it in the *least.*

But ma just struggles round as if she were concealing some murder, and she hides so *many* things she *forgets* half of them, and we don't find them till the next summer. Ma has tried to buy presents for all the relatives this year, and she says she'd rather undertake to feed Barnum's circus animals than try to suit them all. And you see it is the ones we like the *least* that we have to be the most *particular* about, and so we were wound up and down *elevators,* and patronized by haughty floor-walkers, and rung *on* to cars and rung *off,* and pushed under horses' noses, and sworn at by herdic-drivers, till I entirely forgot what Christmas *means,* and only thought what a horrid old fraud it was, anyway. *Every* one gets mad.

I've seen whole *families* broken up in stores making some decision, and ma and I get mad six times to a mile, and only our *perfect*

misery draws us together again. Joe is the *worst* one to buy for. He lays *restrictions*. He says if I ever give him a gilded rolling-pin, or a barn-fork, or a snow-shovel decorated with plush, and tell him it's to hang his keys on, or his button-hook, or his towels; or if I give him a pair of slippers, with a dog's-head on them in green with a blue vine round it; or a fancy pencil that won't work; or a thermometer that keeps you up to 90° all day; or a pair of bottles with *my* favorite perfume in them; or a mess of lace and ribbon that I call a tidy, and that he always finds on his shoulders when he is trying to make a dignified and graceful exit from a room; or anything with lustral painting on it, — if I give him any of those things he'll simply *ignore* me when the opera season comes round; and that is worth *remembering*, you know, for the *opera* season comes round, you know, more *surely* and *regularly* than the young *men* do, and there is so much

real *peace* in having a *brother*. So I have to be very careful what I select for him.

Ma said he was perfectly right in wishing me to give his tastes a little *thought*. She said I ought to think, carefully and *earnestly*, what he'd *like;* and I told her I earnestly *thought* that he'd *like* photographs of the British Blondes, — but *perhaps* I could please him with a lemon-squeezer; so I bought him one, and he was really quite *grateful*, and said my head was getting horizontal. He gave me a diamond-pin that he got at a bargain last *July*, and has been showing me once a month or so ever *since*, and he wanted to know if I suspected for a *minute* that I was going to have it, — the idea! Did he think I supposed he was going to give it to the cook, or the *second* girl? And if it had been for a girl that wasn't in the *family* he wouldn't have brought it home; but he looked as if he thought he was so brilliant about it I opened my mouth and eyes like Koko, and that satisfied him.

Ma says she wishes it was as easy to satisfy him in other things as it is to satisfy him that we are idiots. And isn't it funny, Poesie, that you have to be so particular about your relatives? — a great deal more so than you have to be about *friends*.

Now, if I give any of the girls, like Maud, or Susie, or Lillie Auburndale, anything, they are always real *pleased* with it, no matter how *small* it is, and accept it just as a little sign that I *remember* them; but all my girl-*cousins* want the *earth*, and whenever you present anything to them there is a "Mean old thing!" "Guess she got it at the twenty-five-cent counter!" "Humph! — *damaged*. Well, she *did* lay herself out, *didn't* she?" sort of a way about them which makes you wish you were a Charlie Ross, or an emigrant just arrived, with your relatives all on the other *side* and no money to pay your passage back; and that is why, I suppose, there are so many Christmas *card*s got up and sold.

You see, you *can't* find fault with a card; they always seem so sort of polite and lovely, with all those little messages on them, as if they were just got up especially for *you;* but all the same it brings you up with a jump, *doesn't* it, Poesie, dear, to expect something nice, and only get one of *those?*

Joe went shopping with me one or two afternoons this year, and it is *very* strange how much quicker the people in stores (especially the girls) will wait on you if you have a *man* with you.

Joe said he would go out with me any day shopping if he knew he was of so much assistance. It must be lovely to be a man; things look so much *cheaper* to men than they do to women.

I saw something in Shreve's for ma, but it seemed just a howling *extravagance* to buy it, and I pranced round it and looked at it from all sides to see if the price wouldn't go down a little; but when I took Joe in to see it he

thought it was a mere trifle, and took it right off. He is real handy in that way, and I enjoy his going about with me ever so much, if he wouldn't stop so long to look at the girls; but, of course, that hinders a great deal, for he is governed a good deal more by what is *behind* the counter than by what is *on* it; and you know, in some stores, where the girls are not very level-headed, you never can get them to attend to you at all when there is a gentleman round.

Maud Tuff takes *advantage* of it. She went into a store after a fan one day, and there was one of those perfectly *cr-ushing* blond young men buying something, and the girl who waited on Maud was so absent-minded, having her eyes and mind on *him*, that she let Maud have a seven-dollar fan for $1.17 cents.

I don't know why she happened to pitch on *that* price, except that she probably was thinking of what his silk handkerchief cost. Maud said she thought it was a good chance for the

fellow to benefit *somebody*, — he probably never did it *before* in his life, — so she pocketed the fan and blessed the young man.

Joe offered to try the same thing on for me; he said he'd stand round at any given point, and I could buy the store up. Joe, indeed! He is too fat, and he is too *business*-like. He doesn't understand the intense "I'll-get-you-the-earth-if-you-say-so" air with which a fellow has to look at a girl if he wants her to think he is the only article of any value in *Boston*. Joe just stares at them, and rubs up his mustache and grins, and that's a *great* way!

So I told him he mustn't expect to be of any value except in creating a general *mild* excitement and bossing round some. Well, I succeeded at last in getting all my offerings of good-will *bought*, and was mighty glad, I can *tell* you, Poesie Plympton, to get the old things off my hands and out of my mind.

Ma thinks my gifts were a little *incongruous* — whatever that *means* (when ma wants to

suppress me she always uses big words), because I gave our furnace man a pen-wiper, and grandpa a plush opera-glass bag. But as I gave them *something* I don't see why she should care. I never *saw* anything like Christmas for setting every one off on their ear, and if it wasn't for being perfectly *unprincipled* I should say what I *thought* of it. I'm sure I hope you'll have a happy New Year.

Your devoted

PEPPERMINT.

XXXVI.

BOSTON, January, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I think the idea of its being a nice, new, fresh year is lovely, don't you? Everybody seems so spry, and seems to have sort of a "knock-this-chip-off-my-shoulder" air, which makes you feel real lively, even if you don't just know what you feel lively *about*. And then all the papers say such beautiful things about "new resolutions," and "hopes," and "glad future." Joe says they are beautiful, but monotonous. They are all set up, he says, and they just trot 'em out every year; and he went up and found some of last year's 1st of Jan. papers, and showed me the same thing. He thinks it reads well, but is all nonsense. He says no one can be sure of a "glad future" but a plumber. Joe wants some *new* holidays.

He says the old set are played out, and he wants to celebrate something more recent and more exciting. Perhaps he means something like the holiday we had when Grant was buried, because every one had so good a time that day.

Down at the beach we had a lawn party in the morning, tennis in the afternoon, and a german in the evening. And then all round the grounds we had those "The Nation Mourns" notices, and everything looked *so* lovely! There were lots of gentlemen down on account of there not being any business, and we were so sorry we couldn't get some more good out of the day; it wasn't *half* long enough.

But I am going to tell you how I received with Maud Tuff, New Year's day. Wasn't it perfectly lovely of her to ask me? But she said she knew I had a smile elastic enough to last all day, and my hair stayed in curl, and I'd got a nice strong *back;* and she said I could

talk about *nothing* better than any girl she *knew;* and she said that was all that was requisite for entertaining; and would I come? And I was perfectly *delighted,* you can *imagine,* at the idea of seeing nothing but gentlemen all day long. I can't understand why girls hang up an old basket New Year's, instead of *seeing* the callers. I should keep running to the door every other minute to see who had called, and I don't suppose that would *look* very well.

But Maud says she wants to make the most of her opportunities. She says opportunities are scarce after you get out of your teens. She says they go galloping by, and she says it is better to be on the lookout and quietly grab them than it is to wait till they've gone by, and then pursue them. That is a very nice idea; but Maud don't mean it, because opportunities come galloping right up to her, and *wait* for her to catch them. I had a great time getting a dress that would suit me.

You know there is such a *difference* in dresses; some are stand-*up* dresses, and others are sit-*down* dresses; and I wondered which I should do the *most* of. And I tried sitting round sort of light and airy, to see how I'd look, and Joe said the effect was *very* good, — I might let myself for a cigar-box picture; and as that was as much of a compliment as could be expected of *Joe*, I felt very grateful, and began to feel that peace of mind that comes from the sense of being well dressed.

I hoped it wouldn't turn out as Susie Green's reception day did three years *ago*. She and I got all ready, and we looked just *scr-umptious*, and we put our best Thayer, McNeil, and Hodgkins's foot forward, and sat there and *waited* and *waited*, and no one came, and Susie grew paler and paler, and I grew redder and redder, and the waiters in the dining-room commenced to gape, and the jellies and soft things commenced to wabble round,

and I didn't dare speak to Susie, or Susie to me, for fear we'd cry or get *mad* at each other; so we sat there in a ghastly *silence*, — even the clock stopped finally: it was one of those that are made to give away, and never go except under great *persuasion*. There was so much floral arrangement about the room that I felt as if I was a funeral all by myself, and if it hadn't been for the girls breaking a dish now and then, down in the kitchen, I should have been a raving *lunatic*.

All of a sudden the door-bell rang. Susie grew red and I grew pale, for I felt as if I had been jerked up out of the grave. The man went to the door pretty quick, he felt so *relieved*, I suppose. I tried to unfurl my fan; but my hands shook so, and my teeth chattered so, I thought I wouldn't make a *spectacle* of myself, so I just lay back in my chair as if I was perfectly worn *out* with callers, and Susie pulled herself together *somehow*, and we smiled at the parlor door in

unison, and what do you think came into it? A sample package of Pearline!

Susie said she was going to *kill* that man; but I reasoned with her, and told her *we* should have certainly died if he *hadn't* have come, and let us believe there was an underlying Providence in it; and we felt more relieved after *that* and began to *talk*, and Susie said she couldn't imagine *what* it could be. I asked her to solemnly search the depths of her conduct, and see if there was any reason *why* the one hundred and seven young men she had sent cards to should snub her thus in a *body*, and she said she *couldn't;* and then I asked her to search the depths of her *wardrobe*, and she said she supposed, although she never would have believed it, that it was a hat, and a pair of boots with no heels, that she had been wearing all the fall that had frightened them away.

She said she *told* her *mother* that if she wore those boots she should frighten every

man on the street; but she said she had said it *lightly* and *thoughtlessly*, and never really thought it *would* make any difference, and she said she was going up to scold her mother and burn up the boots; but I asked her if she didn't think it would be a great deal more *fun* to go out and eat things *up* as long as we knew no one would *come*, and as Susie is very fond of eating she said she thought it *would* be; so we diverted our *minds* by filling our *stomachs*, and it was very fortunate that we did, for we found out afterwards that it was a horrid old messenger boy she gave the cards to, and he never delivered them at all; so it *wasn't* her boots, and she would have burned them up for nothing; but, then, you never know what turn a man's mind *will* take, and I don't think Susie was so *very* unreasonable to lay it to her boots, do you? But, as Samantha says, "I am an episodin', and to resoom and continue on."

Maud didn't have any such ghastly blunders. She and I hadn't had time to criticise each other at *all* before the bell rang, and *such* a ninny came in. He is a fellow who has been round in society so *long* he has been obliged to *lie* a great deal, and he has forgotten how to be at all truthful, and you can't keep *telling* him he's a *liar*, and so you have to sit and look as if you believed the whole business; and he told Maud and I that ours was the first call he'd made, and he wished he could make it the last one, and that there wasn't a house in Boston or New York so pleasantly and invitingly arranged as Maud's; and Maud *knows* it isn't so, for her aunt won't let her have it as she *wants* it, and yet she had to sit and swallow the whoppers he told as calm as a plumber; and after he'd whoppered me all over, telling me he was continually hearing the most flattering remarks made of me, it was quite wonderful there was such a continuous stream

of them (and every one *knows* that people call me "that idiotic Perkins girl" half the *time*, because they always confound me with that *other* Perkins girl, — that's *all*, of course) — well, after he'd finished me up we could hear him lie to the waiters out in the dining-room, and to some more gentlemen who came in, and I noticed they all took him just as *we* did, because it's the best and pleasantest way.

I suppose if he should commence to tell the *truth* there wouldn't be anything *to* him. He'd be as flat as a cold buckwheat cake, and he'd get shoved out as quickly.

Then there were two gentlemen came in who *had* been making calls, and it took them almost a whole minute to get to us after they'd said "Happy New Year."

They both caromed on the sofas and chairs, and finally had to sit down kind of weak and tired, and we had to make things easy for them by talking as fast as we could, and

sort of edging them toward the dining-room. Maud says she never will send them cards again, but Joe says it won't do any good. It will be like whipping young children, — they don't know what they are whipped for; and these men were so gloriously so-so that they will never remember how they acted, and will only think Maud is girly-girly, and got *mad*.

But Maud says she isn't going to try to draw a moral for them; she simply don't want the smell of another girl's wine-bottles floating round *her* parlors, for she doesn't have any. She says when she *wants* to run a sample room she'll get a license, and if the gentlemen can't come to see her without the inducement of a "Take something," she'll spend New Year's days darning her stockings.

But the rest were very satisfactory, and if they didn't any of them say anything very *bright*, they all appeared pleasant, and said enough nice things to last us quite a while,

and Maud and I thought it was quite a *success*. We compared notes, and found that ninety-five fellows had asked us each if we'd heard the "Mikado," and if we ladies didn't get tired *shopping*, and if we didn't feel bad about the school committee, and if we liked Anderson's nougat. And Joe says he should think we'd rather they had *all* been gloriously so-so; but we hadn't, for there is nothing *wicked* in being a *bore*, *is* there?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXVII.

BOSTON, January, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I have been *visiting* since I wrote you the last time, out at Aunt Smith's. She lives out in what *I* say is the Highlands, *Joe* says is Roxbury, and *ma* says is Dorchester. I don't think it makes the slightest *bit* of difference, but I find people are *very* particular. I made a girl almost swallow her tongue with anger the other day, because I said as *innocent*, "I believe you live in the Highlands, Miss Drydup." She said she did not live in the Highlands, but Dor-chester. She said it very calmly and in her best-company manner, but I *know* she felt pugilistic by the way she patted her hair.

When a girl is mad, or very much *excited*,

she always plays off steam in that way. Well, Aunt Smith lives out that way somewhere, one of those places where you have to be very particular what horse-car you take, and then you must keep your eye and mind *firmly* on the conductor, or he'll whisk you off to Milton, or South Boston, or something like that. You *can* go in the steam-cars, but the ride and the walk are not at *all* in proportion.

First place you have to take half an hour to get to the depot in *Boston* then you only have time to be hurled into the car and out of it before you are *there*, and then you must walk about two miles to her *house*, besides allowing for tramps and *mud*. She lives on one of those lonesome streets, where you never see any one at the windows of the *houses*, because they've all gone into the city shopping, — anything to get rid of the day, — and they don't have

any *fences* around their houses, because, I suppose, they are all so dead lonesome that they don't want to be cut off from even *disagreeable* neighbors, and the trees always groan and whistle there, and you can hear a team coming *hours* before you see it.

Nobody can even come into the city to the theatre or any place only in just such *weather*, unless they own a *carriage*, because they've either got to freeze their feet in the *horse-cars*, or take the risk of getting burgled on the road to the station; and, of course, any girl with only a slim young man wouldn't feel very easy and comfortable in her *mind*. When any one asks you to *call* out there they have to give you a whole mouthful of directions, and, of course, you never *hear* any of them.

Who ever *does* hear anything when they are saying, "Good-by" to any one? You are either awfully glad to get rid of them,

or else glad to go *yourself*, and your whole mind is on *that*.

But, land sakes! I was only telling you about Aunt Smith's house, and here I am spreading myself all over Dorchester and the Highlands. She invited me out to spend a *week* with her. She lives alone with her brother, and doesn't keep any servants; says she can't spare the time to wait on them, so she does all her own work. Her brother is *very* particular; he is one of those men who look sort of wizzled, as if he had been fried in lard, — and he sputters like it, too; that is, if things are not just *right* for him; if they *are*, he sits down and reads the obituary columns in the papers, and is quite *contented*.

Aunt Smith thinks a great deal of him, — that is, as much as she *can* think of anything that is wizzled up so. And she has everything just right for him always, so I felt a little embarrassed, when I'd been there a day, to

have Aunt Smith taken sick, and I was left in solitary companionship, as it were, with Uncle Enoch. Still, I was rather pleased with the opportunity to show Uncle Enoch that he had been *very* much mistaken in me. He has always said, or *inferred* by his *manner*, that he didn't think much of me. I heard him tell Aunt Smith once that *bangs* were incompatible with *brains;* but then, I haven't got bangs *now*, and he doesn't know anything about how *much* I have improved since he made that soaking remark.

It was at night Aunt Smith was taken, and I ran right down in the sitting-room and got Mrs. Lincoln's recipe-book to see what I should *do* with her; for the Perkins family is so well that, aside from Joe's sprained ankle he had last winter, we are as healthy as an *idiot asylum*. But I could not seem to find anything to do only for convalescents, and of course she couldn't convalesce right off; so I asked her if I shouldn't put her feet asoak and

rub her head with something. Those were really the only things I could think of to do. And she said I was very thoughtful; she *would* soak her feet. I didn't expect she would take up with my offer so *quickly*, and I was a little startled.

At home, when I offer to do anything that is original with me, they tell me I don't know anything, and I'd better go upstairs; and I always *go*, because it is much more comfortable to know nothing than it is to know so *much* that there is something always on hand to *do*.

Now, there is Lillie Auburndale, she knows how to do everything but stand up for her rights. She can read Greek, and her brother gets her to do his lessons for him. She can read scientific articles and *sense* them, so her father gets her to save his eyes. She can mend things, and her mother gets her to tackle the weekly clothes-basket. She can teach Sunday school, and act in theatricals, and go slumming, and make things for fairs,

and rescue the perishing, and care for the dying, and make Parker-House rolls, and *everything* under the *sun;* and as long as she *can* do them people *want* her to, and she just toddles round from one duty to another for all she's worth; but no one ever *expects* anything of *me*, and it is *so* comfortable to have people say, "Oh, *she* can't do anything!" because they don't say it *disagreeably*, you know, but only as if it was a matter of *course*.

Well, Aunt Smith startled me when she accepted my offer, and I went into the next room and turned round three or four times before I could think what I'd best do, and then I found there wasn't any hot water in the *pipes*, and there wasn't any on the *stove*, and how under the sun was I to get any? And I sort of waited for auntie to change her mind.

I thought perhaps she *would*, but she didn't, and it was awfully embarrassing; so I just got

up in the room over Uncle Enoch's and tipped the sewing-machine over. He never likes to be *called*, he says it startles him, and I wanted to please him; and remembered what he said, and I *had* to wake him up about the hot water.

And then I was so *lonesome*. Auntie insists on furnishing her house with rattan furniture, and it always squeaks and creaks, and I thought that even as wizzled up as Uncle Enoch was he'd be better than those awful *squeaks* for company, so I took that way of *rousing* him. He roused real *well*, too, and when he put his head out of the door I said, as gently and casually as I *could*, — he never likes to be startled because his nerves are antic, — "Auntie wants her feet soaked."

I heard him say something about putting my head asoak as he went back into the room, but I suppose he only got mixed *up*. I don't believe Uncle Enoch would ever be

slangy. I guess he was real glad I was there for company. I don't know as I was any real *help*, because I put the teakettle on after he'd made a fire, and I forgot to put any water in it, and it cracked and swelled awfully; and when auntie found what we were doing, she said, why didn't we heat the water on the gas-stove? And Uncle Enoch was so mad to think he never *thought* of it, and I was so frightened to think I'd burst the *teakettle*, that we scalded Aunt Smith's feet, and got the mustard in our eyes, and then we couldn't *see* anything, and she had to get up and wait on herself, of course.

I wanted to bathe her head in ice-water, as these stylish slummers do in novels; but she said as long as she'd got a *chill* she didn't believe it would do, and she said she thought perhaps the best thing I could do would be to go to bed; but she said she was afraid I'd have to help her in the morning, and of course I was very glad to *do* so, but

of course I could not *foresee* what a dreadful *experience*,—but I can't write you about it *now*, because I've got to go down in the library and tell Joe how nice his new pants set, and ask him how it happens that seats for the opera are so low this year.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXVIII.

BOSTON, January, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

I *believe* I left Aunt Smith soaking her feet, didn't I? And I guess she drew the wits all down out of her *head*, because she asked me to get breakfast for Uncle Enoch. Of course, at the *time* I didn't think there was anything so very remarkable about the request; but after-*events* showed me what a very, very queer state of mind she must have been in to think of it for a *moment*.

Did you ever *know*, Poesie, dear, what a tragic thing house-keeping is? You know I never really inquired *into* it but *once*. That was when ma went off so unexpectedly to *recreate* herself, and broke Joe and I all up so. And I thought *then* that it was the *girls* that ailed the house-keeping; but it

seems if it isn't girls it's something *else.* It is dreadfully *mysterious* and sort of like a nightmare, or like those stories where *curses* follow the people all their life, and they think they've got rid of them, and all of a sudden they pop out at them as quickly and quietly as a bicycle, and you have to just scoot for your *life,* or else go to boarding.

Why, I shall *never, never* again feel as nifty as I used to *before* Aunt Smith soaked her feet. You know when we used to eat Italian cream and pickled limes just before we went to bed we would always dream of awful old *rag-men,* and chopped-*up* people, and falling off *bridges;* but *now* when I get sort of mixed in my diet that way I dream of burnt potatoes and sour yeast-cakes. And the other night I ate three slices of sugared pineapple and some lemon sherbet just before I went to bed, and I dreamed the Tavern Club had invited me to get dinner for them, and they were all waiting for it,

and ma and Joe had to throw a wet sponge in at me over the transom before they could wake me up.

You remember how we used to talk about that Broom girl after she left school and got *married* and went to *house-keeping*. She had a real nice *husband*, and satisfactory *children*, and plenty of *money;* but she used to look so miserable and *unhappy* it used to make me all over goose-flesh to see her, and you thought it must be something on her *conscience*, and I thought it must be her *liver*, and she used to tell us, when we asked her what ailed her, that it was only *housekeeping*, and we thought she was just bluffing us.

I realize now what she *meant* and how she felt. Auntie told me uncle would make the fire, and all *I'd* have to do would be to get the steak and baked potatoes and oatmeal, mould the biscuits and make the coffee, and I concluded I'd have several little *extra*

things I'd seen in the cook-book, and just surprise uncle with them.

You know what lovely breakfasts they always have in Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney's novels, and I was going to have just such a one, for uncle is very practical; *too* practical. And I was going to appeal to the æsthetic side of his nature by having some flowers and things on the table. I saw by the cook-book that it took 60 minutes for oatmeal, and 15 minutes for coffee, and 30 minutes for baked potatoes, and 4 minutes for steak, and 10 minutes for biscuits; that was 119 minutes, and I concluded it would take me two hours to get breakfast according to *that.*

So, as uncle has his breakfast at *nine*, I got down at *seven*, and found he hadn't got the fire made.

He said it took Aunt Smith about an hour to get his breakfast; but I knew he didn't know anything what he was *talking* about, for I had the cook-book right under my *arm*,

and I guess I'd believe that before I would *him*. I know he wanted to keep his eye on me, for he looked *very* uneasy, and asked me if I thought I could get his breakfast; if he hadn't better *help* me. You can imagine how *mad* I was, Poesie, dear! But I only acted superior, and just *inferred* that if he'd retire somewhere, and read his paper or shovel off the sidewalk, I should feel more *comfortable;* and so he retired, and I opened the cook-book, and wondered which thing I'd better cook *first*, and I concluded I'd make the *coffee* first, because it always smells so good, and I knew it would *impress* uncle.

I must have made it good, for it smelled just *frabgeous*, and I opened all the kitchen doors so auntie would feel reassured that I was doing beautifully. The old thing boiled over once, and the coffee went scooting round over the top of the stove like a skating-rink; but I shook it up and put it where it "wouldn't boil," the book said; but I'd like

to have them show mé a place on a stove that *doesn't* boil. The old teakettle kept bumping up, it boiled so, and when I tried to get it off it spilled itself all over the front of my new billiard-cloth dress, and it's never been *sponged*, and of course I shall be all crumpled *up;* and it burned my knee, *too*, but I put on an apron so uncle wouldn't see it; he is very particular (aprons are real nice to cover up dirt. Ma thinks they are to keep dirt off, but I think most of people use them to cover dirt up); and then I concluded I'd cook the steak.

It is horrid to see raw meat, don't you think so? I don't think I shall ever eat much again, *anyway*, after seeing how things look before they are cooked. The cook-book said, to save the flank end for something or other, and I knew if there was a flank end to *save*, Uncle Enoch would *want* it saved; but I didn't know which end it *was*, so I didn't save it, after *all*. I put it all on to the

broiler, and kept on turning it, just as the book said, till I looked like a beach restaurant cook.

But just as I was turning it for the eleventh time, I suddenly remembered the potatoes and the oatmeal, and I found I only had ten minutes left. I don't know where the time went to, unless it was in examining the cook-book.

Well, I just scooted round trying to find the potatoes, and they were down in a horrid old bin, and I had to nearly stand on my head to get them; but I wouldn't have called Uncle Enoch if my feet had kicked the *beams*. I grabbed two, I *thought*, and ran up and found my steak all on fire, and I didn't know what to *do*, so I held it under the faucet to put it out. It looked awfully *funny*, but I put some butter on it, — a *lot*, to cover it up, — and I was in *hopes* uncle wouldn't notice it.

But the potatoes and oatmeal were awful to think of; I mean it was awful *not* to think of

them, and I was wondering how I'd get out of it, when I suddenly thought of the *biscuits*. I was so mad and scared I commenced to cry, and my knees burned me *very* painfully. But I knew we *must* have the biscuits; a breakfast seems awful without *these*, doesn't it? So I tried to mould the biscuit; but there was something about them that wasn't *right*, because I couldn't do at *all* as they said in the book.

It said, "Take a quarter of the dough and rest it lightly on the board; then with the thumb and forefinger draw a point of dough up and over to the centre, and hold it down with the left thumb. Give the dough a slight turn toward the left, and repeat several times."

That reads all right, doesn't it? And I supposed if *I* followed the directions all right the dough would meet me half-*way*, so to speak; and you might say, Poesie, dear, that it did *more* than that, — it got on to my hair and my nose, and the more flour I put on my fingers

the worse it *stuck*, and I heard Uncle Enoch coming and the clock strike nine simultaneously; but I was determined I'd be *self-possessed*, so I wiped my eyes with my *arm* and scraped my hands off with a knife, and started to put his steak on the table; but I'd forgotten *all* about setting the table, and there was nothing on it but a Kate Greenaway salt-shaker.

Uncle said, never mind, he'd eat in the kitchen; but unfortunately there wasn't anything to eat. The steak was all squashy and raw, and there wasn't any potatoes or oatmeal, and when I went for the coffee the old stuff had all boiled away, and the pot was cracking.

Uncle didn't *say* anything, — it would have been *much* pleasanter if he *had*, — he only made some allusion while he eat a butter-cracker about getting some breakfast into the Adams House, and he'd look up a girl if auntie was going to be sick; and then he asked me if I *thought*, if he filled up the stove

"I WIPED MY EYES WITH MY ARM."—p. 374.

and fixed the draft all *right,* I could keep the fire from going out till the washwoman got in. Insulting, wasn't he? But I didn't let him *depress* me at all, because I know just how fussy and unreasonable he *is.* And the woman came to wash up the dishes, and she said she guessed I'd been to cooking-school somewhere, I used so many dishes to get breakfast with. There were only four *bowls* and three cups and six iron spoons and four knives and the broiling-iron. I don't think that was so many, considering what I had to cook. Do you?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XXXIX.

BOSTON, January, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Since I wrote you I've been on a racket with Joe. You can imagine what a racket with Joe Perkins would *be*, — about as lively as a Lowell Institute Lecture, or sleighing on *sand*. It was a *dedication*, and I sat, without winking or crossing my knees *once*, through an organ voluntary, two prayers, twenty-seven addresses, three hymns, and a chorus.

What Joe Perkins *asked* me for will forever remain shrouded in mystery; but I suppose he felt *cranky*, as he does when he asks me to see Shakespeare's plays. I ought to have known better than to have gone, for he *told* me there wouldn't be anything to eat, but there would be some "earnest speeches;" and I thought I'd like

to hear some, and find out what they *were*, for we are always reading about them in the papers, you know. And I *found* out. I'd no idea there was so much to say in the world; they took in everything, from the deluge down to the dedication. And yet there wasn't *one* of them that had expected to speak at *all*, they said; it was a perfect *surprise* when they were called upon; and yet they all got up as fresh and smiling as if some one had asked them out to take something; and they said a great deal more than was *necessary*, considering they hadn't expected to say anything at *all*.

There were governors and mayors and ministers, and although they looked very *impressive* sitting there, — something like the "Scene at the Death-Bed of Abraham Lincoln," or "Signing of the Declaration of Independence," — it was rather tough to think you'd got to listen to all their opinions, because seats get dreadfully hard when you

know there is to be nothing to eat, after *all*. But they all seemed to be of *one* opinion, so *that* was a saving.

They all sat and smiled, and struck pleasant attitudes, and turned their toes out. Some of them got very red in the face, and they all looked as if they'd like to squirm round and be comfortable, but they couldn't with the eyes of the "cultured audience" upon them, — they all called us "cultured audience," and most all of them spread their hands out over their stomachs, as if they had to punch out the words the same as they do in dolls. They all looked as if they'd felt easier if it hadn't been for their *hands*. One man fingered his watch-chain and kept his eyes on the left ear of the *reporter* in front of him. Perhaps he wanted to *get* his ear, Joe said was the reason he looked at it so hard. Some of them were more *easy*, and let their cuffs fall easily over their hands just so *much*, while they took a

step to the right and a step to the left, and came forward as if they were going to swim right out to the open sea.

I wanted to please Joe, so I carefully watched the audience to see when the laugh came *in* in all the speeches, because I couldn't have told *myself* to save my protoplasmal ancestor. One man told us all about his impecunious early days, and how he had never expected to stand before such a "cultured audience" and address them; and I wished to goodness his expectations had been realized, for he was the *twenty-sixth* one, and my back commenced to feel as if I'd been coasting for six days running.

I forgot to tell you what the dedication was *for*. It's a society with a very long *name* and a very small *hall*, and Joe has some friends belonging to it. Their object is to pay each other's funeral expenses, and their entertainments are something like an Irish wake, and about as cheerful as digging your own *grave* would be. I believe it isn't *all* for funeral ex-

penses, but that's the main *advantage* I believe. Of course it must be pleasant to *belong* to it, because you are sure of being mourned by all the members, because they are all assessed when you die.

One man, Joe says, nearly broke up the whole society by threatening to die, and he had been insured for an amount that was *dreadfully* hazardous considering he belonged to a bicycle club. Ordinarily, Joe said, they would have buried him *cheerfully*, but under the circumstances they waited on him by inches; but he got entirely well, so they can dislike him quite comfortably again. Shouldn't you think it would be rather *pokerish* to belong to such a thing? But then, I suppose each one thinks the others will die first, and it is a very healthy town that it's *in*, and the undertakers' shops are all in the rear of ice-cream saloons, and the cemetery is way up in the *woods*, so they don't have any little daily suggestions of their latter end, and manage to enjoy themselves quite well.

What Joe and I *dedicated*, you know, was a *hall*. The past season has been a healthy one, and they felt so well off they decided to *build* a hall instead of *hiring* one; but I think they made a mistake in trying to dedicate it without anything to *eat*, though Joe says I swallowed enough gapes to fill me up he should think.

But I don't care, I think nothing is successful without something to eat at the *end* of it, do you? And don't you think chocolate, and wafers are rather slim articles of consumption for the average young man? Cora Shallow always has chocolate and wafers for *everything*. If we should skate all night, and go to her house afterwards, we should have to fortify our stomachs on the wafers and half-a-dozen sips of stuff that tastes like cold mutton gravy. It's chocolate, I *know;* but it *sticks* just the same. Her husband is always running out to see where the fire is, and Joe says he generally goes for *information* to Parker's, or Young's, or the Adams House,

or Vercelli's; and I should think he *would* if *that's* the way she feeds him. I know lots of girls that boast of their economy in their *table;* but I don't see where the *economy* comes in if their husbands have to take an extra meal down-*town* afterwards, do *you?* And sometimes ma, to help the girls Sunday evenings, will have a light *supper;* and Joe will turn the whole china closet and refrigerator upside down about ten o'clock in trying to "fill up."

You know if a man *misses* a meal any time it takes about sixteen to make up for it. *I* haven't had much appetite since I did the cooking for Uncle Enoch. It makes a *great* difference seeing how things look before they are cooked. Joe is very suspicious of things he eats. He never wants anything with *méringue* on it. He says it covers a multitude of sins, and so do croquettes; and *hash* he doesn't have any more to do with than he does with *water.* Now, I *never* dis-

trust hash. I'd eat it if it were made at Revere Beach; and don't you think it would be nice to have a nice plate of vegetable hash after *dancing*, instead of a lot of salad, that makes you feel as if you had swallowed the *caster?* Wouldn't it be good with lots of beets in it, and how strong it would make you feel to argue with the next man who tells you you are going through all the figures wrong, "and how much more style there is to the ladies' dawncing in Ne-Yawk than there is in Bawston"?

But hash *isn't* stylish, and I don't suppose it could look so, even if it were in Weber's or Dooling's window, with all those scrumptious things that make your mouth water so.

But I meant to *tell* you that my dedication efforts were not wholly *unappreciated*, for, after a voluntary, two prayers, twenty-seven addresses, three hymns, and a chorus, Joe Perkins was never the man to let a girl

go home *hollow*, and we came into town and went to What-you-call-it's, and, although the haughty head-waiter put all the lights out except right over our table, and the others gathered in a little group and *swore* at us, sort of *suppressed* like, and scraped the chairs round till my teeth were on *edge*, we calmly ate till I felt at peace with the whole *world*, and was willing to go *home*.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XL.

BOSTON, January, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

Did I tell you that Cora Shallow's sister has been "brought out" at *last*, and the whole family, from the coachman *up*, have nearly had nervous prostration, and they think they'll have to take her *in* again for *funerals* in the family? It has worn them completely *out*, for they haven't thought of anything or of anybody else since she was *born*, and naturally the reaction *makes* them feel limp.

You see they didn't quite know what pattern they'd better build her on, there are so many different *kinds* now, and her mother is *very* ambitious.

When she was a child she was very *pale* and *serious*, and her mother concluded that

she would let her grow up without crimps or corsets; send her to the Boston University and the Gymnasium; let her wear short-wristed gloves, and take walks before breakfast, and then trot her out as something original and *high-minded*.

But she began to develop the most astonishing proclivities for *matinées* and *méringues* and they found her paleness and seriousness only proceeded from some trouble in her *stomach*, and her mother saw she was on the wrong track, and concluded to try her on *style;* so she put her into a *very* stylish private school, where they are *very* rigid about etiquette and general deportment, and she needn't study enough to make her round-shouldered, and could get off any time to go shopping. She took her to the most stylish church, and made her carry her head *up*, and her toes *out*, for all she was worth. She took her to New York shopping four times a year, and tried to get the New York clipon to her

tongue; but it wasn't of the *least* use. She was neither a Schlegel and Hegel girl, nor a Redfern and Hollander. She persisted in being *very* commonplace, and didn't have any leanings *any* way, and her mother was almost *distracted*, and concluded that the only thing left for her to do was to treasure her up very *carefully*, as if she were something valuable, and that would excite people's interest.

That's the way they do with the "*buds*," you know, to bring up their value. So the poor thing was sent to and from school in the carriage, carried to "simple, secluded" watering-places, slept in gloves, and couldn't eat butter, and was treated with a general awe from the entire *family*.

Her brothers and father were taught to speak of her and treat her as if she were very old Sevres, or a relic from Pompeii. She wasn't allowed to fall in love with actors, or car-conductors, or dry-goods clerks, or accept anything but *german* favors from

young men. Her mother spoke of her mysteriously as "my daughter who is not out," and hinted darkly of her charming qualities and wonderful physique.

The "physique" was the best thing she could fasten on to, because there wasn't any *brains* or *style* to allude to. Mrs. Groing Tuff gave the party when she "came out." She is in for all that sort of thing now, chaperoning, and patronage, and matronizing, and what-not; because she says it gives her such a good excuse for being in all the fandangoes without being called a "*passé*," or a hanger-on, or any of those nice little names which women like to sling around.

She says the old fellows who used to court her when *she* was a bud would forget all about inviting her now to things, and to attend all her entertainments, and keep up a general tender interest in her, if she didn't always have a few choice buds on hand. And she says the occupation of bringing out girls

is one that will last her to the crematory, for there will *always* be girls to be brought out, and always young men waiting for them; and she says it is just as exciting as a horse-auction.

She says she is the recipient of so many *confidences* that she has to keep a *book*, so as not to console a young man about the wrong girl, or get contemplated matches mixed up.

She often receives a little commission (it revolts her, but she *does* it), in the shape of a bouquet or a season-ticket, from the maternal side of the buds, for arranging little *affaires de cœur*, and she gets often sworn at from the *paternal* side for the same thing; so it requires the strategy of a *plumber* or a *dress-maker* to keep from getting herself disliked. But she likes it, or at least she says it's preferable to relying on the Tuff hearthstone for amusement, and trying to grow old gracefully on sewing-circles and the Women's Auxiliary Conference.

She thinks "John Anderson, my Jo John" is a very sweet poem, but probably the Scotch characteristics are different from American, because if she and Groing Tuff should try to go "hand-in-hand together" down the hill they'd make a *pretty* mess of it; and if she should as much as allude, in the most distant manner, to his "frosty pow" she wouldn't get anything but the bare household expenses for *months*.

But here I have skipped from Rosebud Shallow's *physique* to Mr. Groing Tuff's *head*, and I *must* tell you about the party.

It was a *great* affair. Every young married woman there said there had never been such a one since the one when *she* was launched; and as they'd all been launched at different times it was a little indefinite, but *sounded* big. Floral decorations were *never* so beautiful, the catering was *never* so luscious, the pants were *never* so *tight*, nor the corsages so *low*.

Joe says the only familiar and accustomed

feature of the affair were the buds themselves; they are the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He says if it wasn't for an occasional elder sister appearing on the scene he should say they brought out the same buds every year, doctored up with a little elixir of life; but you know Joe needs glasses and won't wear them; that's the reason, I suppose. He don't believe in this "tender, unsophisticated, timid, shrinking" guff, he says, that they get off about buds; he thinks that for a perfectly *self-possessed*, look-out-for-the-main-chance-catch-a-weasel-asleep girl, give him a society *débutante*. It makes no difference which style they are.

You know there are so many different styles in one set of buds. There is the gushing little thing, who is "such a pet at home," and goes round in the "three-little-maids-from-school-are-we" style, giggling and wondering; then there is the *calm*, *lofty* kind, who wants to be thought *above* all such business, though everybody knows she'd *die* if she wasn't *in* it, and

she has had her mind on it in a sly, *quiet* way ever since she was old enough to say "boys."

Then there is the little *prim* thing, that belongs to sort of an old-fashioned family, who only have her brought out because some one tells them it is the *thing* to do, and they don't hardly know what to *do* about it, anyway; but she catches on to what the *other* girls do, and in the end makes as good a record as *any* of them. Then there are always buds that are a trifle *blasé*, you know, and have had *affairs* with their dentist, or doctor, or singing-teacher; there are *endless* opportunities, you know, for a bud that keeps her weather-eye open, and they most of them *do*. But such *conceit*, Poesie, dear, as some of them show, and think all the time that a man will get the *moon* for them if they want it; though Joe says it takes so little to make them *think* a man is getting it for them that it's no *trouble*.

Dick Hascot and Charlie Brood can keep a whole hall full of buds fluttering, besides keep-

ing the *old* girls' spirits up a whole evening. But some of them couldn't be pleased if the creamiest swells should let them walk all over them, or the entire masculine population of Boston sent them bouquets. Somehow they are born *glum*, and a glum bud is *horrible*. Fancy all the nice things that are said to them being met with a "Yes, sir;" "No, sir;" "If you please, sir;" "No, thank you, sir," and an Olive Chancellor smile!

Joe says he'd rather drag a double-runner up to the top of Bunker Hill monument than to try and do his duty by such a specimen.

But, as he says, there is always a refuge for girls that are not successes. Their families take them *travelling*, and I really do suppose it is the first real happy time the poor things *have;* for some of them do look perfectly *unhappy*, and as if their mothers had said, "Dive! and then you sink or swim, just as you *please*."

That is the way Rosebud Shallow and her mother looked, and the poor thing went under

twice when the first two gentlemen were introduced, but the third one sort of landed her on her feet, and she is now a *howling* success, if you'll *believe* it.

You see, Joe says there is a great demand now for *commonplace* girls; but there are not any, they are all living up to something, if it's only watch-fobs and French *matinées*. So you see the *wisdom* of the maternal Shallow, and how amply she's been repaid for the cart-loads of flowers Joe says she surreptitiously ordered to back up her Rosebud. Isn't it nice?

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XLI.

BOSTON, February, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

A German editor says it is not *profane*, and in German it is even a *noble* expression, to say "hell of a time;" and that's what we have been *having* over at Rosebud Shallow's.

You know I told you, that, in spite of her mother's efforts to make her pronounced in *some* way, she most stupidly persisted in turning out *commonplace;* and now, to *add* to her mother's anxiety, she turns out to have a mind of her own, which is about the most *imprudent* thing a girl under *thirty* can have. She first began to show *symptoms* of it by *declaring* she wouldn't be laced up to fit her new dresses, and she *would* have her dresses made to fit *her;* and she *wouldn't* toddle round on high heels, and have a quarterly ticket at Kenison's

for her corns; and she *would* cross her knees, with *discretion*, in public.

Of course all these things were dreadful to her mother, after she thought she'd *passed* the Rubicon, and everything was doing finely. But matters didn't come to a crisis till last week. One evening there was a regular messenger-boy ring at the front door, and Mrs. Shallow rushed in and asked ma if she'd go right over and see Rosebud.

Ma thought of course she had fallen off a toboggan, or been crossed off the Cambridge Assembly list, or *something* dreadful, and she began to wish she was up a little more on consolatory selections from the Scriptures, when Mrs. Shallow told her what the trouble *was*, and ma immediately *saw* that not even the Scriptures could console her in such a dilemma.

It seems that the dress-maker had come to measure Rosebud for a new dress for a perfectly *absorbing* ball she was invited to, and

Rosebud had *insisted* that she would have her waist cut as high as seven inches above the waistband, and *wouldn't* have it low cut *behind.*

And she vowed if they connived together and cut it as they *wanted* to, — that is, four inches deep back and front, with shoulder-straps, — she'd wear her coachman's cape all the evening, and sit with her chaperone; and *her* mother wanted *my* mother to go right over and expostulate with her; and she said she would like to have me go over *too.* I never *wear* low-neck dresses; but I'm sure I don't know whether it is on account of my *principles* or my *pride,* because my *shoulder-bones* are so sharp, and *may be* it's because Joe Perkins says he'd raise Gehenna if he ever saw any *décolleté* business going on in *his* house.

Anyway, I'm always ready to blow for *any* side. I think that is the most comfortable way to get along, don't *you?* So I told Mrs.

Shallow I'd go over, but I told her she had better get Mrs. Groing Tuff for a clincher; for of all women to soothe any one's conscience-pangs, and help them sit right down on their uncomfortable principles so they won't even *squeak*, *she* is *the* one. And we knew it must be a case of principles with Rosebud, because she's got the most *lovely* neck and arms. Her mother said that she had very *foolishly* allowed her to read some moral books lately, all about girls that catch the most eligible young men with their *inner* beauty, and, in spite of all the pains she had taken with her, she was flat enough to *believe* it; and she said if Rosebud should turn out a Mrs. A. D. T. Whitney, or a T. S. Arthur girl, her cup of bitterness would be *full*. So we called for Mrs. Groing Tuff.

Most *fortunately* she happened to be at home. She was to have gone out, but the lady who was to entertain was taken with double pneumonia, and Mrs. Tuff said she

never was so *glad* of anything in her life, for it gave her an opportunity to put a mustard-plaster on her *own* chest and soak her feet; but she said she'd willingly defer it in such a cause, and she went right over with us, and told her maid to have the plaster ready when she got *back*.

We found Rosebud rampant and defying the dress-maker, but she treated us all in a very gentlemanly manner, and proceeded to state her case. She said at her coming-out party she had consented to wear her dress very *décolleté*, because her mother had been to so much expense to put her *through* that she didn't want to seem un*grateful* to her and disappoint her; but she said it was a regular case of "give an inch, take an ell." She gave her mother an inch in front and she wanted an ell behind, and she had got to draw the line *somewhere*.

She said her mother belonged to a society for clothing savages, and she has heard her

make the most *earnest* and *tearful* speeches at committee meetings about the necessity of clothing their shameful nakedness as a means of civilization, and then she'll come home and want her own *child* to go out with nothing on but a corsage bouquet and a velvet ribbon above her bustle. She says it was bad enough to have the men's shirt-studs scratch her chest, without having their cuff-buttons chill her spinal column, and she might as well throw up the game at once; if her own brother and father didn't have any shame for her, she'd have it for *herself*, and she'd have her new dress-waist cut within hailing distance of her collar-bone or not at *all*.

Of course I am only giving you an *idea* of what she said, and I was so pleased I secretly gave her a piece of cream walnut candy and tucked a hair-pin in for her. Not that I felt it as deeply as *she* did, but it is so pleasant to be on the winning side, and I didn't see *who* could dispute her argument, for it *would* be dreadful

to have your back scratched with cuff-buttons, *wouldn't* it?

When she had got through, Mrs. Groing Tuff said that her ideas were *beautiful;* they were well *expressed*, and she thought if she wrote them out and *punctuated* them properly, she might get them into the *Woman's Journal*, or the moral department of some Young Ladies' Guide, but they wouldn't go down in society. She said, why should Rosebud set herself up as different from the other girls in her set, who shivered round in their bare necks and got their dresses an inch lower every evening?

She said all the reward she'd get would be the report that her neck and arms were scrawny, and she didn't want them *seen;* the fellows would all leave her alone with her principle, and her men-folks would wish she wouldn't make herself so conspicuous by her *oddity*. People would only sneer at her for assuming a virtue they wouldn't believe she

possessed, and society wouldn't be a bit the better for her poor little extra inches above the waistband. She said the best way was to sail right in to the maelstrom, neck or *nothing;* use cod-liver oil and cucumber glycerine, and pray Providence to keep her from pneumonia and congestion.

She said it was a good thing to *assist* Providence occasionally with a Cognac cocktail after you've been dancing all the evening and then sit down on the stairs half an hour to let a young man massage your fingers; but she says the cocktails and plasters must all be *sub rosâ*, in the privacy of your own apartments, for if people should once begin to acknowledge to each other that it isn't the most natural thing and the most healthy to go around with half your clothes off, everything would be lost. I was just as pleased with what *she* said as I was with what *Rosebud* said; and Mrs. Shallow thanked Mrs. Groing Tuff, with *tears* in her *eyes*, for what she called her "mighty deliverance."

After we got home I asked Joe *his* opinion, for I was sort of divided in my *mind*, and, do you know, all he did was to wink at me and walk out of the room. He's always *so* volatile after he's had his hair cut.

But, do you know, after all that trouble of Mrs. Groing Tuff's, Rosebud had her dress cut *high*, after all.

Your

PEPPERMINT.

XLII.

BOSTON, February, 1886.

MY DEAR POESIE: —

It will doubtless be as painful to *you* as it was to *me* to learn that the sacredness and privacy of our correspondence is not *respected*.

I was going downtown the other morning to see those pictures at *Leonard's*, and, most *unfortunately* for any one with the sensitive disposition I have got, I took a car instead of walking. The Beacon-street cars hadn't started before you went abroad, had they, and you don't know anything about them? Well, *ordinarily* they are just like any *other* car, although the people who ride in them don't want you to *think* so; and the Metropolitan Company, as a sort of sop to Cerberus, Joe says, have painted them entirely different from

any other car, just the same as Mr. Clarke put "The West End Alphabetically Arranged" and a calendar between the West and South Ends, in his "Blue Book," so they couldn't *possibly* touch.

Notwithstanding this, however, they are just like *all* horse-cars except that you *will* see a little better *noses* in the Back Bay cars than in others, and people don't open their *mouths* quite so wide when they talk; but they *say* just as much you better believe, and Joe says, when they're full they are just like bank presidents in that condition, — you can get anything you want *out* of them. People up at the front talk about those in the rear, and *vice versa;* people tread on your toes in two ways, and most of the women can't think *just* where they want to get off, and try to stop the car in all the places where it *can't* be stopped; so you see it is just like any car.

Well, it was *very* full that morning, and, first, I heard two ladies *next* to me talking. One

of them had just come from abroad, I knew, by her uneasy, discontented *manner* and her knowing *bonnet*, and she said to the other one that she saw Poesie Plympton when she was in Venice, and she told her she had letters every week from Peppermint Perkins, and then she asked the other one who under the sun Peppermint Perkins *was*, and which Perkins family she belonged to, *she* couldn't seem to remember. And *then*, Poesie Plympton, it was enough to make your blood curdle in your *veins*, and make you feel like a corpse at a *wake*, to hear them go on.

"Why, every one *knows*," said the other one, "that Peppermint *Perkins* doesn't write those letters to her; she doesn't *know* enough. They are written by a man in South Boston." And then she fixed her bonnet-strings tighter, as if she'd *settled* it.

"On the contrary," said a gentleman opposite them, "I can inform you without *doubt*

that they are written by a gentleman on Beacon street."

"I don't like to *contradict* you, sir," said an *awfully* pretty school-girl right next to him; "but Mamie and I" (that was the girl next to her) "*know* for a *surety* that a lady on *Mt. Vernon* street writes them."

"That's all poppycock!" (This was a very determined-looking young man, in a long ulster.) "*I* know who writes them; it's What's-his-name, down in the Benedict Chambers."

And then a girl down at the *rear* of the car, and another one at the *head*, giggled out simultaneously, "*I* know who wrote them." Upon being pressed, *one* divulged the interesting information that a man on the staff of the *Bloody Bulletin* wrote them. And the *other* said it was no such *thing*, her brother told her it was a *woman*, on the *Boston Insinuator;* but she thought it was a young woman at the South End.

Just then a very slim, resolute-looking girl jerked out, "Well, I know as well as I *want* to know that it's a girl in Cambridge writes them; sounds just like her, — she's a perfect *goose*." And then she got out and got into a Cambridge car, and every one said it must be Clara Smart. Did you ever!

"Well," said a puffy-looking semi-young man, "I'll bet you my bottom dollar that it's a man writes them; they *sound* like a man, damme! No *girl* would write like that. If *any one* in the Perkins family writes them, it's Joe himself."

Right next to him there were three girls, who looked like *teachers*, that hung as close together as if their only strength was in *union*, and *one* of them said: —

"We agree with you *perfectly*. No *lady* would write such letters with such *language* as she uses. Why, once or twice in her letters she says '*damn*'! Wasn't it 'damn,' Ellen?"

"No, Gertrude, I think it was 'darn.'" And a third one said, "She said *both*."

Then they hugged their muffs close up to them, and looked *exactly* as if they glared at me. You can *imagine*, Poesie, dear, that I felt as *stiff* and as much *trod* upon as a wooden pavement; but I sat as quiet as if I didn't want to burst, like a piece of dynamite, and blow them all through the ventilators. And they went on deciding whether I *had* any brother Joe or any "ma," and whether I knew *anything* what I was *talking* about, and if I got *points* from brother Joe, or was I brother Joe *myself?* And there I had to *hear* it all until they asked one gentleman who hadn't spoken at all, but whose opinion they seemed to be very *anxious* for, what *he* thought of them.

"Never read 'em; all bosh. Never read anything but editorials and 'Franklin's' letters. No, I don't know who writes 'em, — some jackass!"

Well, that seemed to sort of break up the party. They all looked at each other with a Peterkin-family expression on, and as much as to say, "What *do* we read them for?" and then the car disgorged them one by one, and I was left all alone.

No one had even *asked* me who wrote my *own* letters; no one had even let me *explain* that I only wrote them to my dear Poesie Plympton, and there isn't any need of their reading them at *all*.

Joe Perkins *pretends* he is *fearfully* enraged to have people think he writes them, just the same as people *protest* against their names appearing in the GAZETTE, when all the time they are working for all they are worth to *get* them in, and offering "light insults" to the reporters and editors to *put* them in.

Joe says that he positively wouldn't be found *looking* at one of my letters; but all the same I know he is *glad* to have all the beautiful ideas and earnest emotions that I express in

them attributed to *him*, — don't you believe so, Poesie, dear?

But just imagine any one going to the trouble or *wanting* to write long letters to you every week, with all the news in them about the girls and things, except *me*. And though I've nothing against the gentlemen from South Boston, Beacon street, Benedict Chambers, South End, and the *Bloody Bulletin*, or the lady on Mt. Vernon street, or the girl in Cambridge, or the news-gatherer on the *Insinuator*, I wish every one would *believe* that the only one who has anything to *do* with the letters is

Your own affectionate

PEPPERMINT PERKINS.

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